

S E R M O N S

ON

Several S U B J E C T S,

BY

SAMUEL CLARKE, D. D.

Late Rector of St. *James's, Westminster.*

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SERMON I.

Of the GLORY of GOD.

I COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

THE Design of the Apostle in this chapter, is to press upon Christians the great Obligation they are under, to walk *worthy of their holy vocation*; to walk *worthy of God*, as he elsewhere expresses it, (1 Th. ii. 12.) to live as becometh *the Gospel of Christ*; to behave themselves in such a manner, as may do *honour* to their religion, may give *Credit and Reputation* to their Profession; In a word, that they be solicitous above all things to promote the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation of Men*; to bring over *Unbelievers*, to the acknowledgment of the Truth; and to prevent, as far as possible, those who *Do believe*, from being in any manner offended and discouraged in their Duty, or by any means tempted and seduced into Sin.

THE Great Temptation in the Apostles days, was that of relapsing into the Heathen Idolatry; either *directly*, into the gross Acts of this Sin, through Fear of Persecution; or *consequentially*, into the Snare of a defiled Conscience, by presumptuously misunderstanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent.

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Against

Against Both these, St. Paul gives diligent Caution in This chapter. Against falling into *direct* Idolatry through fear of Persecution, he exhorts the *Corinthians* by the following Argument, *ver. 13.* *There has no Temptation*, says he, *taken you, but such as is common to Man: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able; but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it: Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from Idolatry.* To strengthen which Argument, he proceeds in the next Verses, to represent to them the Greatness of the Sin; by showing them distinctly, under a plain and obvious Similitude, *what Idolatry was.* *Ver. 15.* *I speak*, saith he, *as to Wise men; judge ye what I say.* He does not insist merely upon his own Authority, though it was no less than Apostolical; as Others, who have no such Claim, are frequently too apt to do: He does not require of them to submit implicitly to what he says, without first considering whether it was right or no: But he exhorts them to make use of their own Reason and Understanding: *I speak*, says he, *as to Wise,* (that is,) *to Sensible and Reasonable Men; Judge ye what I say:* Consider, if what I now propose to you, be not a reasonable and conclusive Argument. *The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* that is, is it not a professing ourselves to be Disciples of Christ? to be Members of his Body? *ver. 16.* *For we,* says he, *being Many, are one Bread and one Body.* In like manner, he speaks of Israel after the flesh, *Are not they which eat of the Sacrifices partakers of the Altar?* that is, is not This a declaring themselves to be Disciples of Moses? *ver. 18.* By the same Argument therefore; *being partakers*, saith he, *of the Table of Devils, by*
eating

eating of the Sacrifices in the Idol-Temple, *ver. 21.* is, in reality, to communicate in the Guilt, of the Heathen-Idolatry.

AGAINST the next danger, *viz.* that of falling *consequently*, into the Snare of a defiled Conscience, by presumptuously misunderstanding the true Bounds of what was lawful and innocent; Against *This*, he cautions them in the remaining part of the chapter. An *Idol*, every well instructed Christian knew to be *No-thing in the World*: As to *Meats* therefore, offered in sacrifice to Idols: the *good Creatures of God* could not be defiled, by the imaginary Superstitions of *vain Men*. And therefore Christians, provided *They themselves* bore no part in the *Heathen-worship*, were not obliged to make any Inquiry, whether Meats sold in the Markets, or set before them at any Friend's house, had by *Others* been dedicated to Superstitious Use, *ver. 25, 27.* Nevertheless, though as to Those who *had* this Understanding, the Matter was clear; yet, if any *scrupulous and weaker* Brother was dissatisfied as to the Lawfulness of This Practice, in *such case* they were bound to abstain: Bound, not by any obligation upon their *own* Conscience, but out of Tenderness and Regard to *His*, *ver. 28, 29.* Lest by *Their* needlessly doing what was innocent to *Themselves*, He should be encouraged to do the same thing which was *not* innocent to *Him*: In which case, it was much more *material*, and of greater importance to the Honour of Religion, that they should avoid offending his Conscience, than that they should unseasonably assert *their own Liberty*. *Ver. 23.* *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.* The Meaning is; All things that are *lawful for a man to do*, 'tis not consequently for the Interest of

Religion that he *should* do them, if it so happens that other Mens Consciences be not therein satisfied as well as his own. For *That* is most for the True interest of Religion, which tends most towards making all men act with a good conscience. *Ver. 24. Let no man therefore seek his own, but every Man another's Wealth:* That is; be not so much solicitous to keep up the full Extent of your own innocent Liberty, as to do *That* which will more generally and effectually prevent Mens falling into Sin. This ought always to be the main End, the great and prevailing consideration, in every Action of a good Christian; *what* will most tend to promote the Kingdom of God, the Practise of universal Righteousness and Truth amongst Men. In order to *This* End, it is not indeed Lawful to do any thing that is *Evil*, but it is at any time very commendable to forbear doing what is *innocent*. *This* End, all our *Great and Religious* Actions ought always *actually and directly* to aim at; and all our *smaller and indifferent* Actions, ought by a *general and habitual* intention, to have the same Tendency. For so the Apostle concludes his *whole* Discourse, in the words of the Text; *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God: Give none Offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own Profit, but the Profit of Many, that they may be saved.*

THE words of the Text, contain a Doctrine of the highest importance in Religion; And therefore, in the following Discourse upon them, I shall more largely and distinctly consider; 1st, What is the true meaning, and full Intent, of that Phrase which we so often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God*: And 2^{dly}, What it

it is, that is required of men in Practice, in order to their satisfying the Precept in the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do All to the Glory of God.*

I. As to the true meaning, of that Phrase which we so often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God*: 'Tis to be observed that the

1st and original Signification of it, is to denote to us the *Essence*, the *Person*, or the *Majesty* of God; that is, *God himself*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. Thus 2 Pet. i. 17. *There came to him*, (to our Saviour at his Baptism,) *such a Voice from the Excellent Glory*: From the *Excellent Glory*, that is, from *God*, his *Father*; as 'tis literally expressed, in the very same Verse. In *This* sense, the Name of *God*, the *Majesty on High*, and some other such Phrases, are also used in the like manner, to signify *God himself*. And, *sitting on the right hand of Power*, Matt. xxvi. 64. is sitting at the right hand of *God*, who Alone has properly *All Power*.

2^{dly}, *This* phrase, *the Glory of God*, signifies in the next place, the *Manifestation* of God's Perfections or Attributes, by the *external Exercise* of them towards his *Creatures*. God, was essentially Happy, before any thing was created, in the injoyment of his own unspeakable Perfections: But the *Manifestation* of the *Glory* of those Perfections, and the *Communication* of Good to *Others*, could not be till the Creation of Things. Hence the Prophet *Isaiah*, represents God Thus speaking, (ch. xliii. 7.) *I have created him for my Glory, I have formed him, yea I have made him.* In *Allusion* to which expression it may probably be supposed to be, that St. Paul says, 1 Cor. xi. 7. that *Maa* is the *Image and Glory of God*.

AND because in every one of the divine Perfections in particular, when manifested singly in their proper and respective Acts, there is something *distinctly* worthy of Adoration and Praise; 'tis therefore not unfrequent in Scripture, to express any one of those Perfections singly, by the Title of the *Glory of God*. Thus concerning the Divine Power, *Pf. xix. 1. The Heavens declare the Glory of God*, (that is, they show forth unto Men the Power of God in creating, and his Wisdom in disposing things;) and the Firmament sheweth his handy-work. And *John xi. 4, 40. This Sickness of Lazarus, saith our Lord, is not unto Death, but for the Glory of God*,—that thou shouldst see the Glory of God,—and that the Son of God might be glorified thereby: The Meaning is; It was intended for a manifestation of God's Power to raise the dead, and of his having communicated That Power also to the Son of Man. And here we may observe, by the way, that the Tyranny indeed of weak and vain Mortals, is apt to take pleasure in Power for Power's sake; and their great Complacency and Glory is, in being able to exercise it arbitrarily and without reason. But God, whose Power is truly infinite, makes it His Glory to exercise Power, only in doing Good; (for almost all our Saviour's Miracles, were Acts of Beneficence as well as of Power;) or at least, if the Subject is not capable of Good, yet the Exercise of his Power, even in Acts of Severity, is according to Justice always. *Rom. ix. 22. What if God, willing—to make his Power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of Wrath fitted to destruction!* He did not show his absolute Power, in fitting a certain Number of men to destruction; as Some have absurdly understood this Text, directly contrary to the words themselves; but he showed his Power in justly

Of the Glory of GOD.

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justly punishing Those, who after much long-suffering and forbearance with them, appeared finally fit for nothing but *Destruction*.

AGAIN : Because Mercy and Goodness are represented in Scripture, as the Attributes wherein God chiefly delights ; according to that of St. James, ch. ii. 13. *Mercy rejoiceth against Judgment*, or, as it is in the Original, *Mercy glorieth over Judgment* : therefore This also is, in a particular and emphatical manner, called the *Glory of God*. Rom. ix. 23. *That he might make known the Riches of his Glory, on the vessels of Mercy* : And Ephes. iii. 16. *That he would grant you, according to the Riches of his Glory, to be strengthened—by his Spirit in the inner man*.

IN pursuance of which same manner of speaking, Grace or Mercy is by the Evangelist called likewise the *Glory of Christ* ; John i. 14. *We beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of Grace, (that is, of Mercy,) and Truth*. And even of a Man, Prov. xix. 11. *It is his Glory, saith Solomon, to pass over a Transgression*. And the Thanks, which men are bound to return to God for his free Goodness and Compassion towards them, is expressed to be accordingly to the Praise of his Glory ; Eph. i. 14. *The redemption of the purchased Possession, unto the Praise of his Glory*. In This particular sense, is sometimes meant That general Observation, that the End to which God directs All his Actions, is his own Glory ; Rom. xi. 32. (and Gal. iii. 22.) *God hath concluded All under Sin, that he might have Mercy upon All*.

THUS God's manifesting the several Attributes and Perfections of his Divine Nature, in the external Exercise of them towards his Creatures ; is frequently what the Scripture means by the *Glory of God*.

3dly,

3dly, FROM hence, on the other side, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to *God*, for His manifestations of his Goodness to *Them* ; is likewise in Scripture stiled *The Glory of God*, or *Their giving Glory to Him*. To *give Glory to God*, is to promote his *Honour* in the *World* ; or to contribute what we can towards keeping up in All mens minds, a just *Sense* of him, and *Regard* towards him.

AND This is done, particularly ; by *Worshipping* him, with *constant* and perpetually-returning Acts, of solemn *publick Devotion*. *Pf. xxix. 1. Give unto the Lord, glory and strength ; give unto the Lord, the glory due unto his Name ; worship the Lord, in the Beauty of Holiness.* Thus the *Saints in Heaven*, (*Rev. iv. 11.*) are represented as *worshipping* God, and saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour and Power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they Are, and were Created.* And the *Nations of the Earth* are directed accordingly, (*ch. xix. 7.*) *Fear God, and give Glory to him, and worship him that made Heaven and Earth.* Which *Worship* because the *Heathen World* gave to *Others* instead of the *True God*, even to *Gods which did not make the Heavens and the Earth*, (*Jer. x. 11.*) as the *Prophet* describes them ; therefore *St. Paul* Thus charges them, *Rom. i. 21.* that *when they knew God, yet they glorified him not as God.*

Again : BY *Thanks* particularly returned for *special Mercies* or *Benefits received*, by which we profess our *Sense* of *God's* being the *Author* of those *Benefits* ; is the *Honour* of *God* promoted among *Men*, or *Glory* given unto him. Thus (*Luke xvii. 18.*) when of the ten *Lepers* that were healed, one only, who was a *Samaritan*, was truly *Thankful* for the *Mercy* shown him ;

him ; There are not found, says our Saviour, *that returned to give Glory to God, save This Stranger.*

Further : *G L O R Y* is in like manner said to be given to God, by *Acknowledgment of his Government and Supreme Dominion in the World* : Phil. ii. 11. *That every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father* ; that is, to the Honour of God who exalted him, and who gave him a Name which is above every Name, by setting him at his own right hand in the Heavenly places. Thus also Rev. xi. 13. when great Judgments of God fell upon the idolatrous World, the remnant (says the Text) *were affrighted, and gave Glory to the God of Heaven* : that is, they then acknowledged the True God to be indeed Supreme Governor of the World. For not acknowledging of which, but proudly assuming to himself the cause of his own Grandeur and Riches, King Belsbazzar is thus reproved by Daniel, (ch. v. 22.) *Thou, O Belsbazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, but hast lifted up thy self against the Lord of Heaven ; and—the God in whose hand thy Breath is, and whose are all thy ways, thou hast not glorified. And King Herod, when, being arrayed in royal apparel, he sat upon his Throne ; immediately the Angel of the Lord smote him, Acts xii. 23. because he gave not God the Glory ; that is, because forgetting his dependance upon God, he suffered the People to applaud him as being himself a God, and the Author of his own Greatness.*

UPON the same Ground, *Confession of past Sin*, with true *Humiliation*, and a just Sense of the *Unworthiness and Ungratefulness of Sin* ; is in Scripture stiled *giving Glory to God*. Josh. vii. 19. *Joshua said to Achan, who had stolen some of the accursed things, and indeavoured to dissemble it ; My Son, give, I pray thee,*

thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him: That is; Acknowledge, that nothing can be concealed from His all-seeing Eye, and that to Him there is no secret nor Shadow of Darkness, where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themselves,

Actual Repentance, and Forsaking of Sin, by real Amendment, is still in a higher degree giving Glory to God, or promoting his Honour. Rev. xvi. 9. Men blasphemed the Name of God, who hath Power over these plagues; and they repented not, to give him Glory.

HABITUAL Holiness, or a constant established Practice of Virtue, in the course of our Lives, is yet further, in the highest degree we are capable, giving Glory to the God of all Righteousness and Holiness, who is of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Glorify God, in your Body, and in your Spirit: Being filled with the Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the Glory and Praise of God, (Phil. i. 11.)

IN a word: Whatever tends to the true Honour of Religion, to the promoting and establishment of Virtue and Goodness among Men; Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, (Phil. iv. 8.) these are the things which promote the Glory of God. God, is himself a Being of infinite Holiness and Goodness; a perfectly just and righteous, as well as Supreme, Governour of the Universe: And the Glory of such a Governour, is the establishment of his Moral Kingdom, the universal establishment of the Dominion and Power of Virtue, in the Wills of all reasonable and intelligent

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Creatures. His *natural Kingdom*, is by *Necessity*; for the material World *cannot but* obey him: But his *moral Kingdom* which is His *greatest Glory*, is the Dominion of *Righteousness* and *Virtue*. Hence the Apostles, in their Exhortations to the Practise of *Any Virtue* whatsoever, frequently urge *This Argument*, that it will be to *the Glory of God*: (Rom. xv. 5.) *God* — grant you to be like-minded one towards another, — that ye may with one mind glorifie *God*, even the Father of our Lord *Jesus Christ*. And in the words of the Text; *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*: Do every thing, even the most common actions of Life, in such a manner, as may become the Professors of the Gospel of Christ, and may promote the Honour and Interest of Religion. The words are of the same import, with these in Col. iii. 17. *Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*; do every thing so as becomes the Disciples of Christ, giving Thanks to God, even the Father, by Him; that God in all things may be glorified, through *Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. iv. 11; or, as 'tis expressed, Tit. ii. 10. that ye may adorn the *Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. To adorn the Doctrine of God; is, by your Practise to cause it to appear lovely and beneficial to mankind, to show how glorious 'tis in its Effects, and how worthy to be embraced, and practised by all men. This is what the Scripture elsewhere calls, glorifying the word of the Lord, Acts xiii. 48; glorifying it, and causing it to have its free course; so St. Paul explains it, 2 Th. iii. 1. 'Tis promoting the interest of Religion and Virtue, and the general Salvation of Men; 'Tis spreading the Knowledge of God, and bringing men over to the Obedience of his Commands, in order to their becoming

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capable of being Partakers of his *Happiness*. Which *Happiness* and *Perfection* of rational Creatures, being the great *End and Design* of God's Creation, and what both Nature and Scripture calls the *Kingdom of God*; therefore *whatever* tends to the promoting of Virtue and True Religion in the World, is promoting the Honour and the Glory of God. When Many of the Jews, convinced by our Saviour's Miracles, embraced the Truth of his Doctrine; the Scripture thus expresses it, *Mat. xv. 31.* that they glorified *the God of Israel*. When our Saviour promises his Disciples, for the further confirmation and establishment of their Faith, that God would certainly grant them the Petitions they should rightly put up in his Name; he does it in the following manner, *that the Father*, says he, *may be glorified in the Son*, *Joh. xiv. 13.* In the 21st chapter of the same Gospel, *ver. 19*; because the Testimony and the Sufferings of the Martyrs, are one of the principal Means of propagating the True Religion, therefore our Saviour's foretelling in what manner St. Peter should die, is by the Evangelist thus expressed, that our Lord signified by what Death Peter should glorify God. For the same reason, the Spreading of the Knowledge of the True God, among the Nations of the World, is by the Prophet called, *setting his Glory among the Heathen*, *Ezek. xxxix. 21.* And because Nothing does This more effectually, than the virtuous *Lives* and good *Examples* of those who profess the Truth; therefore the Apostle tells the *Corinthians*, (*2 Cor. iv. 15.*) that *the abundant grace* which was in them, did, *thro' the thanksgiving of Many*, redound to the Glory of God. And our Saviour, exhorting his Disciples to be bright Examples of Virtue to the World, does it in this manner, (*Matt. v. 16.*) *Let your Light*, says he, *so shine before*

before Men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

ALL that has been said upon This Head, concerning the *Glory of God*, is still further confirmed by the consideration of the Contrary, what is meant by the *Dis-honour of God*. Literally and strictly speaking, 'tis evident God cannot be dishonoured, because his essential Honour or Glory is immutable. But as the promoting of *Virtue and Righteousness*, is glorifying God; so the bringing any *Reproach* upon Religion and Goodness, is dishonouring of God, who is the Author of true Religion and the Fountain of Goodness. Thus, under the *Old Testament*, the Wickedness of *Eli's Sons*, [1 Sam. ii. 17.] caused men to abhor the offering of the Lord. And the Sin of *David*, (2 Sam. xii. 14.) gave great occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Upon This ground, *Nebemiah* thus exhorts the Jews at their return from the captivity, (ch. v. 9. Ought ye not to walk in the Fear of our God, because of the Reproach of the Heathen our Enemies? And God complains by the Prophet *Isaiab*, ch. lii. 5. They that rule over my people, oppress them, saith the Lord, and my Name continually every day is blasphemed. And again, by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxvi. 20. When they entered unto the Heathen whither they went, they profaned my Holy Name, when they said These are the people of the Lord.

IN the New Testament, the same Argument is urged by *St. Paul*, Rom. ii. 23. Through breaking the Law, dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through You, as it is written. And in his particular Directions to persons in particular Stations, his exhortation to young women is, that by sober conversation they give none occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully, 1 Tim. v. 14:

and that they be *chaste and discreet*, that the word of God be not blasphemed: Tit. ii. 5. And to young men, ver. 8. that by their *uncorruptness, gravity and sincerity*, — be that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them. And to Servants, that they behave themselves well towards their Masters, that the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphemed, (1 Tim. vi. 1.)

THUS have I briefly explained what is in Scripture meant by This phrase, *The Glory of God*, and our giving glory to him. 'Tis promoting the interest of *True Virtue and Righteousness* in the World. For as the natural Kingdom of God over the inanimate Creation, consists in his Exercise of *Power and Wisdom*; so the spiritual Kingdom of God over the rational World, consists in the *Obedience of the Wills* of reasonable Creatures to the *moral and eternal Laws of Righteousness*: And the *Glory of God*, as of every good Governour in Proportion, is the *Goodness and Happiness* of his Subjects. When therefore we say that God does every thing for his own Glory, and that This is his *Ultimate End*; the meaning is, that his Design in all things is the final establishment of his Kingdom of universal *Righteousness* in the whole Creation. And accordingly when a Man does any Action because it is good and right, or forbears it because it is evil and immoral; then only, and not when he acts upon any *enthusiastick* principles, does he truly intend the *Glory of God*.

THIS in General. I should now have proceeded in the 2d place, to show more particularly, what it is that is required of men in Practice, in order to their satisfying the Precept in the Text, *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*. But This, hereafter.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N II.

Of the GLORY of GOD.

I COR. X. 31.

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.

IN Discourſing upon theſe words, I have propoſed to conſider, 1^{ſt}, what is the True Meaning, and full Intént, of that Phraſe which we ſo often meet with in Scripture, *The Glory of God*: And 2^{dly}, What it is, that is required of men in Praſtiſe, in order to their ſatiſfying the Precept in the Text.

I. As to This Phraſe, which we ſo often meet withal in Scripture, *The Glory of God*; I have ſhown, that it denotes, in its 1^{ſt} and original Signification, the *Effence*, the *Perſon*, or the *Majeſty* of God; that is, *God Himſelf*, who is the *Fountain of Glory*. 2^{dly}, It ſignifies the *Maniſeſtation* of God's Perfections or Attributes, in the *external Exerciſe* of them towards his *Creatures*. And from hence, 3^{dly}, on the other ſide, the *Return* or *Acknowledgment*, which *Creatures* make again to God, for His maniſeſtations of his Goodneſs to *Them*, is likewise in Scripture ſtiled, *The Glory of God*, or *Their giving Glory to Him*.

THUS far, I have *already* proceeded in *general*. That which *Now* remains, is,

II. To consider distinctly and *particularly*, in the several Cases and Circumstances of Life, *what* it is that is required of men in Practice, in order to their satisfying the Precept in the Text; *whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.*

And 1st, HE who will in all things promote the *Glory of God*, must in the first place show forth the Sense he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious*; by such Acts, as are *Professed Acknowledgments* of our own Dependence upon God, and *exemplary* to provoke other men, (as the Apostle elegantly expresses it, *Heb. x. 24.*) unto *Love and to good Works*. Of This Kind, are *publick Prayer and Thanksgiving*: *Pf. cvii. 31. O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men! That they would exalt him also in the Congregation of the people, and praise him in the Seat of the Elders!* By this *publick Worship of God*, are made the properest *Expressions* of the Sense we have of our Dependence upon him; and by this manner of expressing it, is That *Sense itself*, the Sense of God and of Religion upon the Minds of men, most effectually kept up and preserved. Very emphatical is the Description St. *Jobn* gives us, of the whole Universe joining, in their several Capacities, to give *Glory* in This manner to their Common Lord: *Rev. v. 13. Every Creature, which is in Heaven, and on Earth, and under the Earth, and such as are in the Sea, and All that are in them beard I, saying, Blessing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne.*

2dly, He who, according to the Direction in the Text, will do all things to the *Glory of God*; as he must be constant in *Acts immediately and directly religious*, so he must resolve against being at Any time guilty of *Any Action* which is *directly irreligious*. Of This Kind, is *every deliberate Sin*, every Act which is *against a man's own Conscience*, every known *Transgression of a Commandment*. Which things, whosoever is at any time guilty of; far from *doing all to the Glory of God*, he on the contrary, as much as in him lies, *dishonours* and reproaches him. For wilful Sin, sinning *presumptuously* or *with a high hand*, (as the Scripture expresses it;) is in the Nature of Things a *Dishonour to God*: *Rom. ii. 23. Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God? 'Tis reproaching the Lord; or contending, in effect, that his Commandments are not wise, just, and good: Num. xv. 30. The Soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that Soul shall be cut off from among his people. 'Tis casting Contempt upon his Laws; Is. v. 24. They have cast away the Law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 'Tis defying his Power; 1 Cor. x. 22. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than He?* In a word; 'tis professing that we know better what is right and fit for us *ourselves*, than he can judge for us; and therefore that *we will not have Him to reign over us*. This is the case of presumptuous Sins; of all Actions, known to be directly and in their own nature *irreligious*.

BUT, not only by Actions *intrinsically* and in their own Nature immoral, is God dishonoured; but also by every thing, which in its *Circumstances* is Evil; by

every Act, which either the *Person who commits it*, judges to be unlawful; or which needlessly gives *Offence to Others*, and becomes to *Them* the Cause or the Occasion of Sin. For, the Kingdom of God consisting in the Prevalency of universal Righteousness, Sincerity, and Truth; it follows, that not only by the Practice of whatever is *intrinsically immoral*, but also by whatever *wounds and defiles the conscience* either of him who does the Action, or of Others who by the Example of it are led into the Commission of what to Them is Sin; by every such thing is God's Kingdom of Righteousness diminished, and the Dominion of Virtue over the Hearts and Wills of Men (which is the *Glory and the Delight of God*) is weakned and impaired. For whoever does any thing with a Sense or Judgment in his own mind, of its being unlawful when he does it; however otherwise the Act might possible have been innocent in its own Nature; yet he sins at That time against his own *Conscience*, and consequently against *God*. And whoever does any thing with a probable Knowledge or Expectation, that his doing it will be a means of deceiving or tempting his *Neighbour* into Sin; however otherwise the Action might have been not only innocent *in itself*, but innocent also to *Him*, because he *knew* it to be so; yet in This case, by *Uncharitableness*, he sins against his *Brother*, and consequently against *God*. For, since the promoting of Virtue and Goodness in the World, is the most important of all things; it becomes us at all times, and in all our Actions, to look upon it as our main End. And though the *Perverseness of malicious persons*, who are apt to *misrepresent* things, is by no means an Obligation upon any Good man, to forbear doing any thing that he *himself* knows to be innocent; yet the

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Weakness of sincere and well-meaning persons, who by relying upon His Example, might be led to do what would in Them be Sin, is a very strong reason (unless he has otherwise some Great Occasion or Necessity of Acting,) it is (I say) in point of Charity a very strong reason, why he should forbear doing that which would be so hurtful to Them. Where the thing that gives Offence to Others, and either drives or leads them into Sin, is such as not only upon account of this Circumstance or Consequence, but intrinsically also and in its own Nature is unlawful; there the Scripture denounces against the Offender the utmost Severity of Woe, as against a presumptuous Dishonour of God: Matt. xviii. 6. Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea: Wo unto the World, because of Offences; for it must needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that man by whom the Offence cometh. But where the thing done is innocent in itself, and only by accidental consequence proves an occasion of Sin to Others; yet even There, he who foresees this consequence and takes not care to prevent it; is in Scripture charged with Uncharitableness towards the Soul of his Brother, if it be a Fellow-christian whom he so causes to offend; or with want of true Concern for the Glory of God, if the Offence be given to an Unbeliever.

As to the Case of Unbelievers; the Apostles thus exhort, 1 Pet. ii. 12. Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that — they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of Visitation. Again, 2 Cor. viii. 21. Provide for honest things, (that is, things of good reputation as well

as lawful,) *not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. Abstain from all Appearance of Evil, 1 Th. v. 22. Provide things honest, that is, reputable, in the sight of all men, Rom. xii. 17. Walk honestly towards them that are without, 1 Th. iv. 12. Honestly, that is, wisely, circumspetly, so as to afford them no Objection against your religion; Thus the same Apostle explains himself, Col. iv. 5. Walk in Wisdom towards them that are without.*

As to the case of *Fellow-Christians*; how the *Glory of God* is to be promoted, by our behaviour towards *Them*; by our taking care to avoid even such *innocent* things, as we see likely to lead any of *Them* into Sin, and may be forborn without any great inconvenience to *Ourselves*; the Apostle explains himself at large, by putting a particular and very remarkable instance, in the *chapter whereof my Text is a part*, and in the *eight chapter of This Epistle*, and in the *fourteenth chapter to the Romans*.

THE Case he puts, is, whether it was lawful for Christians to eat of such meats, as the Heathen had sacrificed to their Idols. In the *present chapter*, whereof my Text is a part, he thus resolves the question, *ver. 24, 27. Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, or set before you at a friend's house, That eat, asking no question for conscience sake; i. e. Care not, whether the Heathens have superstitiously offered it to their Idols, or not; For the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof; ver. 26. The Meaning is; God made all things, and every creature of His is good, if it be received with Thanksgiving; nor can any man's Folly and Superstition make That to be unclean, which God has made clean to us. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto Idols, ver. 28. then eat*
not,

not, for his sake that shewed it; that is, forbear
 Then, out of charity to Him, least Your Liberty cause
 Him to strain his Conscience, and so fall into Sin.
 And then he sums up all in the words of the Text,
Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do,
do all to the Glory of God: Give none Offence, neither
to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of
God.

IN the eight chapter of this epistle, he again pro-
 poses and resolves the same question: *Ver. 4. As*
concerning the eating things offered in Sacrifice unto
Idols, we know that an Idol is nothing in the World,
and that there is none Other God but One. Howbeit,
saith he, ver. 7. there is not in every man That know-
ledge: For some with conscience of the Idol unto this
hour, eat it as a thing offered unto an Idol; and their
Conscience, being weak, is defiled. Wherefore, though
in reality, and to a man of understanding, the good
creatures of God are not at all the worse, for having
by other mens vain and senseless superstition been
offered to an Idol; yet take heed, says the Apostle,
ver. 9. lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a
stumbling-block to them that are weak: For if any man
see Thee which hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols
temple, shall not the conscience of Him that is weak, be
emboldened, (in the original it is expressed very em-
phatically, shall he not be edified,) to eat those things
which are offered to Idols? And through Thy Know-
ledge, shall the weak Brother perish, for whom Christ
died. And then he concludes, ver. 12. When ye sin
so against the Brethren, and wound their weak con-
science, ye sin against Christ: Wherefore if Meat make
my Brother to offend, I will eat no meat whik the
World scandalizeth, lest I make my Brother to offend.

Lastly,

Lastly, THE same question he again determines, in the fourteenth chapter to the Romans: *I know, saith he, ver. 14. and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to Him it is unclean: But if thy Brother be grieved with thy meat, Now thou walkest not charitably: — All things indeed are pure, but 'tis evil for that man who eateth with offence: It is good therefore, neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother stumbleth, or is made weak. Hast thou Faith? have it to thyself before God.* His meaning, in these last words, is; not, (as some have wickedly perverted the words,) that provided a man has right notions of religion *himself*, he need not openly own and profess them before Others: But his meaning is, that in things of an *indifferent nature*, (of which only he was here speaking,) men of understanding had better keep to themselves their lawful Liberty, than run the hazard of encouraging others to venture further than their Consciences will innocently permit them. *Hast thou Faith? i. e. hast thou assurance of the innocency of what thou doest? have it to thyself before God.*

THE Sum is This: To do any Evil Action, that Good may come of it, is *not lawful*: But to forbear any innocent action, when such forbearance is the likeliest means to prevent another man's falling into Sin, is both *lawful* and *commendable*. Nay, the acting otherwise, is, in such case, *Uncharitableness* towards our Brother: *Rom. xiv. 15. If thy Brother be grieved with thy Meat, Now walkest thou not charitably.*

To apply this to Other cases. We affirm, and with great reason, that such Use of Images in religious Worship, as the Church of Rome enjoins, is *direct Idolatry*.

Idolatry. But suppose it were *not*; yet, so long as the generality of the people cannot possibly pray otherwise amongst them, than *with* Conscience of the *Idol*, as St. Paul expresses himself, 1 Cor. viii. 7. 'twould be the greatest Injustice in the world, for *Them* to cause their Brethren to perish, for whom Christ died; by imposing upon them needlessly, and without warrant of Scripture, so manifest a stumbling-block and so evident a cause of falling into Sin. And the like may be said in proportion, concerning the Violent and Obstinate Imposition of *any* dubious doctrine, or *any* dangerous Ceremony, beyond the original Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel. 'Tis chusing to hazard the Salvation of Men, and to cause Divisions, and Strifes, and unnecessary Difficulties of Conscience among the Servants of Christ, for the sake of Pride and Vanity and Love of Dominion over men. Whoever is sincerely desirous to *do all things to the Glory of God*; as he will be heartily sorry for all his *own* Sins and Offences, so he will really endeavour, as much as in him lies, to prevent the Sins of *Others*; He will avoid every thing, that may lead them into Sin; he will set them an example of Virtue, in the Practice of his own life; he will recommend to them in his Discourse, upon all fair and proper occasions, the excellency and the reasonableness of Religion; he will rejoice and be truly pleased, to see Virtue, Righteousness, and universal Charity, and Good-will, prevail and prosper in the World; he will lead no man into Error, nor be easy to see any man continue in it; but will wish with *Moses*, that *all* the Lord's people were Prophets; and contribute, as much as in him lies, towards enabling them to be so. And, if he be in Power or Authority, he will desire not to grieve
or

or burden the Consciences of Men ; but will esteem it of much more importance to unite Christians in the plain Simplicity of the Gospel, and in the bonds of Righteousness and true Charity ; than to establish for Himself Any Power or Dominion over the Consciences of his Brethren, either by presumptuously claiming to himself a false *spiritual* Authority which Christ has not given him, or antichristianly and atheistically making use of *Temporal Power* to compel or awe men in matters of Religion.

THUS have I briefly explained the Two *Primary* and Great Instances, wherein consists a man's *doing All things to the Glory of God*. It implies *first*, that he regularly show forth the Sense he has of God upon his Mind, by *Acts immediately and directly religious* ; and *2dly*, that he resolves against being at Any time guilty, of Any *Action* which is *directly* Irreligious. But further,

3dly, In all great Actions, Actions of *moment and consequence* in the main course of a man's life ; although they be *not* such, as have any direct relation to Religion ; yet ought he *expressly* to intend the *Glory of God*, as his chief and main end. He ought to intend the *Glory of God* ; that is, the promoting of *Truth and Right, of Justice and Goodness* in the World. For whatever is *Therefore* chosen, *because* it tends to the promoting of *Virtue and Goodness*, is (in the Scripture-sense) done *for the Glory of God* : And whatever is *for That reason* avoided, *because* it has, in any manner, a *Tendency to Evil* ; is avoided *for the Glory of God*. Now there is no *considerable Action* in any man's Life, no Action of *consequence and importance* in the World ; but which, even though it has *not any direct relation to Religion*, yet some way or other has

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in the whole a Tendency, to promote the Cause either of Virtue or of Vice. Such is, for instance, a man's choosing his *Profession*, imploymēt, or manner of Life in the World. Whatever Profession, though not in itself directly *unlawful*, yet leads Men needlessly into many and strong *Temptations* to Sin; will always, if possible, and if he is not under any *pressing* necessity, be avoided by a Man who is sincerely desirous to do all things to the Glory of God. Every *innocent* Profession, may *equally and indifferently* be chosen by any good Man; But yet, even in *That* Choice, his *main and ultimate* End, will be the Exercise of Right and Truth, and the mutual comfortable Support of Men, in Justice, Faithfulness and Charity. Profit, Power, Credit, Reputation, and the like, may very innocently, and very justly be aimed at, by Men in Any business or imploymēt whatsoever: But these things must Always be desired, with a due Subordination to the Interest of Virtue; which is the *Glory of God*, and the only true and final *Happiness* of Men. Whoever, in the Great *Lines* and main *Course* of his Life, aims merely or principally at worldly and temporal Ends; in the attainment of Those Ends, he *has his Reward*.

4thly and *Lastly*; As in all *Great Actions*, a good Christian ought actually; so in all even the *smallest* and most *inconsiderable* Actions of Life, he ought habitually to intend the *Glory of God*. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God*. The Scripture represents all, even irrational and the very *inanimate* creatures, (*Pf. cxlviii. 2, &c.*) *Beasts and all cattle, worms and feathered fowls; the Sun, the Moon and Stars; Mountains and all Hills, fruitful Trees and all Cedars; Fire and Hail, Snow*

and Vapours, Wind and Storms; The Scripture, I say, represents even All These as glorifying God, because they act regularly, according to the Nature he has given them, and by his Command. Much more then, may even the most common actions of Men, be justly said to be done to the glory of God; when they are done decently and soberly, regularly and innocently; as becomes Men, and Christians, and such as have upon their minds, even when they are not directly thinking of it, an habitual Regard to God and Religion. In a Journey; to a diligent Man, and one whose mind is really bent upon his journey's End, every thing he does, as well as actual travelling, tends truly to the same End. His Rest and Sleep, his Stops and Refreshments, nay even his very Diversions and Digressions, still tend uniformly, towards enabling him to arrive at his intended Home. And thus likewise, in the course of a Religious Life; to a Man truly and sincerely Virtuous, every Action of his Life promotes the Honour of Religion, which is the Glory of God; and every thing he does, is sanctified by a Habit of Virtue: His worldly business and imployment, by Justice and Charity running uniformly through all the parts of it; The common Actions of his Life, by decency and inoffensiveness; His very Pleasures and Diversions, by Innocency and right Intention. In a word; whatsoever he is doing, he still Always habitually remembers the End, and therefore he never does amiss, Ecclus. vii. 36.

III. THE Uses, which may be drawn by way of Inference from what has been said, are:

1st, FROM hence we may learn how severe a Reproof those persons justly deserve, who, far from doing all things, as the Apostle directs, to the Glory God; do,

do, on the contrary, by *Profaneness, Unrighteousness and Debauchery*, directly *dishonour* Him whom they profess to serve ; bringing a *Reproach and Infamy* upon our most Holy Religion, and causing the Name of God and the Doctrine of Christ to be through *Their* means *blasphemed* among Unbelievers.

2dly, THOSE deserve in the next place to be rebuked sharply, who, though they do not dishonour God by Acts directly *irreligious*, yet are *careless and negligent* in matters of Religion ; not much regarding, whether *Truth or Error* prevails in the World ; nor being solicitous to do *honour* to their religion, and to promote the *spreading* of the Doctrine of Christ, by showing the *reasonableness* of it, by preserving the *Simplicity and Purity* of it, and by exhibiting the *Beauty* of it to all Mankind.

3dly, AFTER These, are to be reproved such as *have* indeed a *Zeal* for Religion, but *not according to Knowledge* ; placing the main Stress of Religion, in *Forms and Ceremonies* unworthy of God ; or in *Opinions and Notions*, which either through their *obscurity and unintelligibleness*, or by their *disagreeableness* to the *Everlasting Gospel*, to *natural Religion* and to the *Divine Perfections*, hinder, instead of promoting, the Glory of God.

4thly, EVEN the *Best* of Men have need to be admonished, and to be *put in remembrance*, that they stir up the *Gift of God* that is in them, 2 Tim. i. 6. That they *purge* themselves continually from every evil work, that they may *bring forth* more fruit, John xv. 2. that they may be *more and more diligent* in all their Actions, to do every thing to the Glory of God : Not with a superstitious Anxiety, or burdensome Preciseness, in things of little moment ; but with a cheerful Applica-

tion of every thing that occurs in Life, to the promoting of Truth and Right, of Reason and Virtue among Men. Rejoicing in the Glory of God, and in the establishment of his Kingdom of Righteousness; as That wherein consists the Happiness of the whole Creation, both in This World and in That which is to come.

Lastly, FROM hence we may learn to comfort and satisfy, the minds of some *weak* Christians; who, not having a right Notion *What* the Glory of God is, can never assure themselves, that they are *True* Promoters of it. They read that *Moses* prayed to God to blot *Him* out of his book, if thereby the children of *Israel* might be saved; and that *St. Paul* even *wished* Himself *accursed from Christ*, if thereby the Nation of the *Jews* could be converted. And hence *some* have put the question to *Themselves*, and *others* have been so weak as to put it in their *Writings*; whether a Christian ought to be content to perish finally, for the Glory of God. The question, is absurd and contradictory; and has *no* foundation in the Texts referred to. *Moses*, and *St. Paul*, in the circumstances they were *Then* in, might charitably, and without any extravagancy, be willing to have born the *temporal* Curse then coming upon the *Jews*, (which is all that their words mean;) if thereby it could have been possible to have saved the whole Nation. But such High Expressions of Affection, are always well understood, in *all* books and in *all* languages, to have, not a literal, but a figurative Meaning. A *Christian's* Duty, of doing all things to the *Glory of God*, signifies plainly *This only*; that he ought always to prefer the Interest of *Religion and Virtue*, before all *Worldly considerations* whatsoever. Which that We may All do, &c.

S E R M O N

SERMON III.

Of GOD's being the FATHER of Mankind.

MATT. xxiii. 9.

*And call no man your Father upon the Earth;
For One is your Father which is in Heaven.*

IN the following Discourse upon these words, I shall endeavour to show distinctly, 1st, in what Sense God is in Scripture usually styled *Our Father*. 2^{dly}, What we are to understand, when we find it affirmed of him, that he is in *Heaven*. 3^{dly}, What is meant, by calling any man *our Father upon the Earth*. And 4^{tly}, Why we are forbidden to call any man *Father on the Earth*, upon account of there being *One which is our Father in Heaven*.

I. In the *First* place; there are *two* Senses wherein God is in Scripture usually styled *our Father*.

I. THE *first* is, as he is the *Father* or *Author* of all things, by originally creating or giving them Being. In *This* Sense, the wisest of the *Antient Philosophers* among the *Heathen*, styled God, the *Father of the Universe*. And the *Scripture* sometimes uses expressions, of the same Nature. Thus when St. Paul had de-

clared, 1 Cor. viii. 6. that *To Us there is but One God* ; he immediately in the very next words gives a Description who That One God is, by adding ; *the Father, of whom are all things* ; that is to say, *from whom all things derive their existence, and are brought into Being by his Will and Power*. The like manner of speaking we find again, *Eph. iv. 6. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all: Father of all*, that is, Author and Creator of all things. So the word is used in the *Creed*, when we declare we believe in God ; *the Father Almighty*, or, *the Almighty Father*, the Maker of Heaven and Earth. And This is the utmost latitude of signification, to which the word can possibly be extended : it reaching, in *This* sense, to things both *rational* and *irrational*, *animate* and *inanimate* ; making God truly and properly, in the fullest and most literal Sense, *the Father of the Universe*. But more commonly, the word is used in Scripture in a Sense somewhat more restrained, with regard to rational and intelligent Beings ; God being peculiarly stiled Father, with respect to These to whom he has given *Life and Understanding* ; but Creator or Maker only, with respect to *inanimate* things, to whom he has communicated only *Simple Being*. Thus *Heb. xii. 19. The Father of Spirits* : And *Eph. iii. 15. The Father* ;—*of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*. *Father*, and *Family*, are relative Terms ; And 'tis a noble Idea, which This Text gives us of God ; representing the *whole Universe* as the House of God, framed and preserved by his Power ; and all Orders of intelligent Beings, as the Family of God, under the Government of his Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, in their several and respective Stations. [In *This* sense, *Angels* are stiled the *Sons of God* ; Job

xxxviii. 7. *The morning-stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy*; that is, the *Angels* rejoiced and praised God, at the time of the creation of the visible World. And the same Assembly, who are stiled the *Host of Heaven*, 1 Kings xxii. 19. (*I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the Host of Heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left*;) are, in another description of the like vision, called the *Sons of God*, Job i. 6. *There was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*. Again, Dan. iii. 25. *Nebuchadnezzar saw four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and the Form of the Fourth, says he, is like the Son of God*; or like a *Son of God*, that is, like an *Angel*; as the same person is stiled, ver. 28 of that chapter. Upon the same account; namely, upon account of having received *Life* from the hands of God, *the Life of an intelligent and rational Being*; our first Father *Adam* is called, *The Son of God*, Luke iii. 38. which was the *Son of Adam*, which was the *Son of God*. And all mankind, considered as *Creatures* endued with *Reason and Understanding*; in opposition to *Idols*, which have neither *Understanding, Sense, nor Life*; are said to be *The Off-spring of God*, Acts xvii. 29. This therefore is the *first* and original Sense, wherein God is in Scripture stiled our *Father*. It signifies our deriving from him, our *Being* and our *Life*. All things are his *Creatures*; but *Intelligent Beings* only, are his *Sons*.

2dly, Thus far, God is our *Father* by *Nature*. But 2dly, there is still a higher and more peculiar sense, wherein the Scripture represents God as being our *Father* spiritually, by religion and grace. Concerning which, St. Paul thus speaks, Rom. viii. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

Father. The true explication of which Notion, may (I think) rightly be set forth in the following manner. As God is in *general* the Father of all *intelligent* and *rational* Beings, so he is in a more *particular* and exalted manner the Father of Him, who in Scripture is stiled *The Only-begotten Son*; the *Brightness of his Father's Glory*, and the *express Image of his Person*; the *Image of the invisible God*, and the *First-born of every Creature*, Col. i. 15. By the interposition of this divine person, the only-begotten Son, *it pleased the Father*, saith St. Paul, *to reconcile all things unto himself*, Col. i. 19. *By Him*, saith he, *to reconcile all things*, ver. 20. *whether they be things in Earth, or things in Heaven.* The Meaning is: The whole World of rational Creatures being considered as the *Family of God*, (according to that Text before-cited, which declares that *Of Him the whole Family in Heaven and in Earth is named*;) the government of this House of God is represented by the Apostle, as administered by the only-begotten Son: whom the Father has *given to be the Head over all things*, that *he might gather together in One all things in Christ*, both *which are in Heaven and which are on Earth, even in Him*, Eph. i. 10, 22. By *Sin*, men reject themselves, and in the divine Justice, are rejected out of This household of God, and are no more worthy to be called his Sons. But by True Repentance and Amendment of Life, made available through the Intercession of Christ our great High-Priest; they who *were sometimes alienated, and Enemies in their Minds by wicked Works*, are again reconciled, Col. i. 21. and, *Through Him have access again by one Spirit unto the Father*; and are no more *strangers and foreigners*, but *fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*, Eph. ii. 18. This Restoring of Sinners by Repentance

Repentance and Reformation of Life, through the Mediation of Christ, to the Favour of God ; is elegantly filed by *St. Paul, God our Father's Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ to Himself*, Eph. i. 2, 5. The Effect of which reconciliation, to those who by the Practise of Virtue and Righteousness, continue to live worthy of their most Holy Calling ; the Effect of it is, that *Christ is not ashamed to call them Brethren*, Heb. ii. 11. that *God himself vouchsafes them the Denomination of Sons*, 1 John iii. 1. *Behold, what manner of Love the Father has bestowed us, that we should be called the Sons of God ; and that accordingly they have access with confidence to the Throne of Grace, as to a merciful and reconciled Father ; Gal. iv. 5. Ye have received the Adoption of Sons ; And because ye are Sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father ; wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but a Son.* In consequence of this State of Reconciliation, our Saviour in all his Discourses constantly represents God, as having the tender care and affection of a *Father* towards us : teaches us to acknowledge him and look up to him as our Father, upon account of his continual *Providence* in preserving us ; his *Love*, in revealing himself to us by his Son ; his *Goodness*, in being ready to assist us with his Spirit ; his *Mercy*, in forgiving our Offences ; his *Authority*, mixt with the greatest *Patience*, in correcting us, not, as earthly parents, *after their own pleasure, but for Our Profit*, Heb. xii. 10. And, to encourage us to pray to him, he lays before us That moving and most pathetick Argument, *Mat. vii. 11. If ye being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him ?* In the Writings indeed

deed of *Some* Authors, God seems sometimes to be represented to us under a different character; as a *hard master*, expecting to reap where he has not sown, and to gather where he has not sowed. But such representations are consequences only of mens own private Opinions; and not taught, but *reproved*, in Scripture. For God is Love; and he loves, and does good to, all his Creatures; and his tender mercies are over all his works. Only against wilful *wickedness* he is indeed irreconcilably severe, and *unrighteousness* is his abhorrence and abomination.

II. HAVING Thus, briefly, explained what the Scripture means, when it styles God our *Father*, I proceed now in the 2d place to show *what* we are to understand, when we find it affirmed of him that he is in *Heaven*. As if He who is equally in *all* places, could be confined in *Any*; or any proper Habitation could be ascribed to *Him*, whom (1 Kings viii. 27.) *the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.* II. lxvi. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool; Where is the House that ye build unto me? and Where is the place of my Rest?* The true meaning therefore, when God is said to *Be in Heaven*, is to express his *Height and Dignity*; not in *place*, but in *Dominion and Power*: It being only a *similitude* drawn into common Speech, from the situation of things in Nature. As the Heavenly Bodies, the Sun and Stars, are High above us in *place*; and all Earthly Blessings depend on the Sun and Rain and the Descent of kindly Influences *literally from above*: so, by an easy *figure* of Speech, whatsoever is above us in *Power*, we are from hence used to represent as being above us in *Place*. The Power and Dominion of the King of *Babylon*, is thus set forth by the Prophet *Isaiab*,

Isaiah, ch. xiv. 13. Thou hast said in thine Heart, I will ascend above the Heights of the clouds, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God: And the Destruction of his Monarchy is described after the like manner, ver. 12. How art thou fallen from Heaven! Thus likewise our Saviour speaking of the Pride and Greatness of Capernaum; and thou Capernaum, says he, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell, Mat. xi. 23. And with Us Now, Mens being High or Low in Place, is not meant to express their habitation upon Hills or in Vallies, but the Dignity of their Station in the World. The Greatness and Dignity of our Saviour's own Kingdom, is represented in Scripture, by his sitting at the right hand of God in the heavenly places: We know that God has no Hands, nor any Shape or Figure; But the meaning of Christ's sitting on his right Hand, is, his being exalted next to him in Authority and Power. Thus therefore when we speak likewise of God, even the invisible Father himself, as being in Heaven; it must always be understood to express his Supremacy, not in Place, but in Power and Dominion; that He is the High and Holy One, Great and Glorious and Supreme above All.

BUT there is also another reason of this expression, of God's being in Heaven; To signify, that tho' of his real actual presence there is indeed no Confinement, yet of his Glory and Majesty there is in That place a particular and extraordinary Manifestation. Thus the Archangel in the Book of Tobit represents it, *ch. xii. 15. I am (saith he) one of the Seven Holy Angels, which go in and out before the Glory of the Holy One; and the Salutation to the Churches, which begins the Book of the Revelation, is of the same Nature, ch. i. 4.*

Grace

Grace be unto you and Peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before his Throne. The real and proper Presence of God, is equally and necessarily in All places: But his Throne, his Glory, the place where the righteous shall see his Face, that is, a more particular glorious manifestation of his Power and Majesty; this, is in Heaven. In like manner here upon Earth; in places, where God has been pleased more particularly to manifest his Glory, to place his Name There, to receive There the Homage of his Servants; in those places God in Scripture-Phrase is said to Be. Not as if at the same time he was not equally in all other places also: For in Him we live and move and have our Being, Acts xvii. 28. And, as Job elegantly expresses it, ch. xxiii. 8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But the Meaning of God's being said to Be in particular places, is, that in those places he chose to manifest himself to his Servants, and to receive Homage from them. The Patriarch Jacob, concerning the place where he first saw the Vision of Angels ascending and descending out of Heaven; surely, saith he, the Lord is in this place, Gen. xxviii. 16; and it shall be the house of God, ver. 22. In like manner in the Temple at Jerusalem, the Glory of God appeared visibly, 2 Chr. vii. 1. and There it also was, when it did not appear: And how He, whom the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, did thus at that time dwell on Earth, in a Temple made with hands, is in a lively manner expressed by Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 30: Hearken thou to the Supplication of thy
Servant,

Servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray in, or towards this place; and bear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place: The meaning is; God, who is present in every place, had appointed in That place to receive his Tribute of Worship. Again; when the Lord appeared to Moses in the Bush; the place, says he, whereon thou standest, is Holy Ground, Exod. iii. 5. Not that God himself was present even Then, in the Bush, any more than in all other places; but the place was made Holy, by God's manifesting his Glory there; For so St. Stephen expressly tells us, Acts vii. 30. There appeared to Moses an Angel of the Lord, in a flame of Fire in the Bush.

IN like manner, God is said in Scripture to dwell in the Hearts of good men: And that the Bodies of them which are sanctified, are Temples of the Holy Ghost; God dwelling in them by his Holy Spirit: Not by any Confinement of the Presence of God; but by his being pleased to show forth the Power and Influences of his Holy Spirit, in particular places, and to particular persons.

III. HAVING thus shown at large, what the Scripture means by styling God our Father, and by affirming him to be in Heaven; I am in the 3d place to consider, what we are to understand by calling any man our Father upon the Earth. And This plainly appears in the Context, from the whole Scope and Design of our Saviour's discourse, in the directions he gives to his Disciples. The Scribes and Pharisees, says he, sit in Moses's seat;—But do not ye after their works: For they—love greetings in the Markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi: But be not ye called Rabbi; for One is your Master, even Christ: And call no man your Father upon the Earth; for One is your Father, which is in Heaven: Neither be ye called Masters; for One is

your Master, even Christ. From hence it clearly appears, that calling any man our Father upon Earth, signifies, paying to any Earthly Teacher, (not a due regard and attention, but) That deference, which the Scribes and the Pharisees were by our Saviour reproved for unjustly claiming. And the Deference or Regard they claimed, was, that men should follow them ignorantly and implicitly, in the Traditions they taught. In the Histories of the Antient Jews 'tis observed, that they frequently preferred the Traditions of their Rabbi's, even before the Writings of the Prophets themselves. And This Account of them, we find confirmed in Scripture. God complained of old by the Prophet *Isaiah*, ch. xxix. 13. *Their Fear towards me is taught by the Precept of men; i. e. Humane Authority had too much weight among them, in matters of Religion.* In our Saviour's time, things were grown to a still higher degree of Corruption in this respect: *In vain*, says our Lord to the Pharisees; *do they worship God, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments (or Inventions) of Men*, Mar. vii. 7. *For, laying aside the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of Men*, ver. 8. And he repeats it again in the next verse; *Full well ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Tradition*, ver. 9. *Making the word of God of none effect, through your Tradition which ye have delivered*, ver. 13. The Professors of Christianity itself quickly began, even in the earliest times, to fall into some degrees of the same Fault; as appears by the instructions St. Paul gives to *Titus*, ch. i. 14. *Rebuke them sharply, that they may not give heed to—Fables and Commandments of Men.* Some of these Commandments of Men, he particularizes, Col. ii. 18. *Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of*
Angels,

Angels, intruding into those things which be hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind. In after-times, these Commandments of Men (as is the nature of all Superstition) continually multiplied and increased; according to the Apostle's Prophecy, 2 Tim. iv. 3. The Time, says he, will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine, (that is, they will not be content with the Form of Sound words delivered by Christ and his Apostles;) but after their own lusts shall heap up to themselves Teachers,—and shall turn away their ears from the Truth, and shall be turned unto Fables. And the only possible way to prevent this Evil, is to consider, that this assumed Authority of Men in matters of Faith, prevailed from time to time more and more, till at length it ended in the establishment of that Kingdom of This World, which we call Popish religion. And here I cannot omit to observe, that the word Pope, the original of which is the old Greek word πάππας, signifies Father; and it signifies Father in that very sense, wherein the Text forbids us to call any man Father upon Earth. For by calling a man Father here, our Saviour plainly means having regard to humane Authority in matters of Faith, or in Doctrines of Religion. Which thing, is altogether inconsistent with true Christianity; because the revealed Will of God, or whatever is additional to the law of Nature, is at once made known to us Whole and Entire in the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. The adhering immoveably to which Rule, the Law of Nature and of the Gospel; is acknowledging that One only is our Father, which is in Heaven; and one only our Master, which is Christ. All we, are brethren only; and have no Authority to make any doctrines of Religion, but only to persuade and earnestly exhort men to practise what Christ has

already taught. The *Apostles themselves*, did not take upon them to exceed their Master's instructions: Much more inexcusable are vain men, who in *later Ages* have been guilty of so great and high a presumption. The Power which the Church of *Rome* has assumed, of imposing Doctrines of Faith, by the Authority of *Popes* and of *general Councils* and *Armies* and *Inquisitions*; is most elegantly described in Scripture under the character of a *man of Sin, sitting in the Temple of God*; (2 Theff. ii. 4.) that is, in his Church; *exalting himself above God, showing himself that He is God, speaking great words against the most High*, (Dan. vii. 25. Rev. xiii. 8.) and taking upon himself to *change Times and Laws*, and commanding *all the World* to *worship him*; that is, imposing upon men by Force, his own Religion. This is the description given us of the Church of *Rome*, in the Prophecies of Scripture; and whosoever *taketh from, or addeth to*, the words of that inspired Rule, by endeavouring to set up any human Authority in matters of Faith; makes himself in proportion a partaker of the Sin, of that great Corruptness of the World.

IV. AND now, having sufficiently explained what is meant by *calling any man Father upon the Earth*; it will be very obvious to understand, in the 4th and last place, how the *ground and reason* of this prohibition is assigned to be This, that *One is our Father which is in Heaven*. For, our Father in Heaven having clearly, and fully, prescribed to us the conditions of Salvation through Christ; it follows evidently that They who *call men Fathers upon Earth*, that is, who of their own Fancies make other conditions of Salvation, thereby causing Divisions and Contentions among their Brethren; do in effect subvert all true Religion. For, (1 Cor. iii. 11.) *other foundation can no man lay, than that*

that which is laid, even Jesus Christ ; that is, the doctrine already taught, by Christ Himself and his Apostles. If any man departs from This foundation, and teaches for doctrines the Commandments of Men ; he forsakes the Fountain of Living waters, and hews him out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water, Jer. ii. 13. Or, as St. Paul expresses it, Col. ii. 19. not holding the Head, from which all the Body has nourishment ministered, his religion consequently is vain. Or if upon this true Foundation, he builds the Hay and Stubble of unintelligible Speculations, and doctrines useless in Practice, he at least loses great part of his Reward, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 15. For This reason, it highly imports all Christians to take heed how they hear, Luke viii. 18. and diligently to search the Scriptures, wherein are the words of eternal Life. And they who have Power and Influence over others, can never too often recollect, how God complains by the Prophet, concerning the Shepherds of Israel, that with Force and with Cruelty have ye ruled, Ezek. xxxiv. 4 ; and how our Saviour instructs his Disciples, saying, Ye know that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise Authority upon them ; But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant ; For even the Son of Man himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many, Matt. xx. 25, 26, 28. The Head of the Church of Rome profanely ridicules this Text, by styling himself the Servant of the Servants of Christ, at the same time that he imperiously imposes upon their Faith his own Doctrines and Creeds, and persecutes them to death if they submit not to Him and his general Councils as Fa-

thers upon the Earth. But the True Apostles of our Lord, did not so learn Christ. *We preach not ourselves, saith St. Paul, but Christ Jesus the Lord: (2 Cor. iv. 5.) Neither have we Dominion over your Faith, but are Helpers of your Joy, 2 Cor. i. 24.* Thus spake the Apostles concerning *themselves*, even though they were inspired persons, and had a just claim to infallibility in Doctrine. How much more ought All, who have no pretense to such miraculous Gifts, to be of the same meek Spirit; following the Admonition of St. Peter, 1 Pet. v. 3. *Feed the flock of God,—not as being Lords over God's heritage, but as being ensamples to the Flock:* And that of St. James, ch. iii. 13. *Who is a wise man, and indued with knowledge amongst you? let him show, out of a good conversation, his works with meekness of Wisdom;* and ver. 1. of the same chapter, *My Brethren, be not many Masters:* The word in the original, is, *many Teachers;* but our Translators very rightly render it, *Masters;* because the Apostle there speaks of the very same kind of haughty and imperious Teachers, against whose Practises our Saviour warns his Disciples in the Text, and in the words next following: *Be not ye called, Masters; for One is your Master, even Christ;* and *call no man your Father upon the Earth: for One is your Father which is in Heaven.* Which admonition, that All among us may constantly attend to, both who Teach and Hear the Simplicity of the Gospel; God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N

SERMON IV.

Of being the CHILDREN of GOD.

ROM. viii. 16, 17.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God: And if Children then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joynt-Heirs with Christ.

IN discoursing upon these words of the Apostle, I shall endeavour to explain briefly, 1st, What is here meant by our being *Children of God*. 2^{dly}, What is to be understood, by our being stiled *Heirs of God*, and *joint-heirs with Christ*. And 3^{dly}, How the *Spirit of God*, the *Spirit itself beareth witness with Our Spirit*, if we be good Christians, that these Characters do truly belong to us.

1st, I AM to consider what is here meant by our being *children of God*. God is in Scripture stiled, *The Father of All*; Eph. iv. 6. *One God and Father of All, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*. Here, the title *Father* is applied to him, in respect of his giving *Being* to all things, as they are his *Creatures* and the *Work* of his hands. For though inanimate or irrational creatures can in no Sense be stiled *The Children of God*; yet God, considered as the *Author of All Being*,

ing, may properly enough be stiled *The Father of the Universe*. In a Sense somewhat more restrained, and with regard to such Beings, to whom he has given *Life and Reason and Moral Faculties*, God is stiled the *Father, of whom the Whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named*, Eph. iii. 15. The *Whole Family of rational creatures, Angels and Men*. And These in like manner, upon account of the *living and rational* nature he has given them, are frequently in Scripture stiled *The Sons of God*. By *Sin*, Men forfeit the Benefit of this natural relation to God their Father, and become *Strangers and Aliens and without God* in the World ; being rejected by him, and no longer looked upon as his Sons, but cast off as Objects of his Wrath and Displeasure. By *Repentance and renewed Obedience*, they who are effectually convinced of the Folly and Unreasonableness of Sin, return, as far as in them lies, to their Father's house, and desire to have Access again to his Favour and Mercy. And God, by accepting their Repentance ; and pardoning their past Sins, according to the gracious Terms and Declarations of the Gospel ; and giving them the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to sanctify them for the future ; receives them again, as a gracious Father, and *adopts* them for his Sons ; (in St. Paul's language, gives them *the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry, Abba Father* ;) and they become again *fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God*. This is what the Scripture elsewhere calls *Regeneration or the New Birth* ; and sometimes, the *New Creation* ; Describing such persons, as being in a spiritual sense, Created anew *unto good works* ; and Born, *not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God*, John i. 13. Being born again, *not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,*

ruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever, 1 Pet. i. 23. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, having, according to his abundant mercy, begotten us again unto a lively hope, ver. 3. And the plain Meaning of all these figurative expressions, is ; that when a Sinner sincerely returns to a Sense of his Duty, and effectually amends his Life ; God, who considereth whereof we are made, and remembreth that we are but Dust, pitieth him even as a Father pitieth his children ; and, though in strictness of estimation he be indeed no more worthy to be called his Son, yet, upon this his true Repentance, he receives him again to the Arms of his Mercy, and says, Rev. xxi. 7. I will be his God, and he shall be my Son. Answerable to which account of this relative character on God's part, 'tis manifest that the Title on Our part, of being children of God, is expressive of the highest obligations of Duty and Obedience, and of our stedfastly persevering in the practise of all Virtue and Righteousness. The departing from which originally, as it caused those who by creation were naturally the Sons of God, to become Strangers and Enemies to him ; so by returning to it again, and by no other method whatsoever, can they, who through wicked works have been strangers and enemies to God, become again, through the divine Mercy, the Sons of God by adoption, and continue to preserve That character by their perseverance therein. In This, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil : Whosoever does not righteousness, is not of God.

HAVING thus explained briefly, what the Apostle in the text means, by stiling us *the children of God* ; the next thing I proposed to consider, was

2. WHAT we are to understand by the following characters ; being *heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ* : If children, then Heirs ; Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. The word, *children*, being a Title of affection and Love, implies, when used in the figurative Sense, an expectation of favour, and a dependance for Support. Gal. iv. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a Servant, but, a Son ; and if a Son, then an Heir of God through Christ*. The expression is exactly the same with That in the Text ; *We are the children of God, and, if children, then Heirs*. If the relation of children be acknowledged, the very Notion of that relation carries along with it in course a Promise or Assurance of a Blessing. And because God is infinitely more able to provide for those who rely on Him, than earthly Parents are to make provision for their natural Posterity ; and the portion of God's children can by no possible misfortune, by no Accident, by no Force, by no Fraud, be taken from them, unless, by departing from the commandments of their Heavenly Father, they voluntarily cast themselves out of His Favour ; therefore the inheritance of those on whom the Father has bestowed such manner of love, that they should be called the Sons of God, is in Scripture stiled a Kingdom which cannot be moved, the things which cannot be shaken, a City which hath foundations, a continuing city, (Heb. xii. 28, 27. xi. 10, 13, 14.) an inheritance among them that are sanctified, the inheritance of the Saints in Light, an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that fadeth not away. (Acts xx. 32. Col. i. 12. 1 Pet. i. 3.) And God himself, in St. John's vision, speaking from the throne of his glory, thus declares, Rev. xxi. 7. *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son.*
Here

Here the Title of *Son* or *Child of God*, being used as of the same import with One that is to inherit *all things*, that is, all those things which God has promised to Them that love him; is exactly correspondent to the Apostles manner of speaking in the Text, *If children, then Heirs*. And because the Promise of God, who cannot lie, standeth always sure; so that the Reward of Virtue, however at present distant and invisible, is yet in reality as Certain in the determinations of the Divine Counsel, as if it was already actually in possession; hence St. Paul, carrying the same figure still higher, in his description of the Happiness of those sincerely religious persons, whom in the text he stiles *Heirs of God*, thus expresses himself, *Eph. ii. 5. God hath quickned us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit, (hath already made us sit) together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*. And elsewhere he calls them, *fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God*: And tells them that they are come, (that they are already come) unto Mount Sion, unto the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of Angels, and to the Spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediatour of the New Covenant, and to God the Judge of All.

THIS is the full meaning of that *Second* character, given in the Text to sincere Christians; that they are *Heirs of God*; Heirs of his Promises, and Kingdom.

IT follows; *And Joint-Heirs with Christ: Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ*. The sense of which expression, is this. Though Men, as well as all superiour rational Creatures, are originally by Creation the Children of God; and so long as they continue to obey the Law of their Nature and the Com-

Commands of God, cannot fail consequently to continue in his Favour: And though *Sinners*, when they sincerely repent and amend, have good and reasonable Grounds, from the consideration of God's natural Perfections, to hope for Mercy and Compassion at his hands: Yet neither to *Sinners* is God under any obligation of *Justice*, to restore them upon their Repentance to the *same state of Favour* as if they had never sinned; nor even to the most *innocent* and perfectly *Sinless* Creatures (if any such there were,) is he under Any natural obligation to confer *Immortality* and an *eternal Kingdom of Glory*. All, that *Justice* in That case requires, is, to distinguish them according to their Deserts, in That rank of the Creation wherein their natural Capacities placed them, and for such a Space of Time as the original good pleasure of the Creator allotted them. The Being which God freely gave, he may at any time, without any injustice, take away: And no Creature, even *without* consideration of *Sin*, has any more claim of Right to continue for ever, or even for any limited time to be exalted above the natural improvement of its original capacities, than it had any Right to be created *Before* it was, or to have been made in Any *Higher Species* of Creatures. *Eternal Life* therefore, or the *Kingdom of Heaven*, is the *Gift* of God; not due to Mankind by *Nature*, not a Claim of *Right*; no, not even if they had continued Innocent; much less, to returning *Sinners*; but 'tis the *Gift*, the *Free Gift* of God, originally in the State of *Innocence*; and to *Penitents* still much more, is it merely a *Free Gift*, in and through *Christ*. *That which is born of the Flesh, is Flesh*; and has no title, no claim of Right, *naturally*, to the *Spiritual Kingdom* of God. But the Father has appointed unto his

Son

Son Jesus Christ a Kingdom; and I, says our Lord to his Disciples, *appoint unto You a Kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto Me: That whosoever overcometh, (that is, whosoever prevails over the sinful Temptations of the World,) may sit down with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in His Throne.* By Nature, we are only in general the *Creatures* of the Almighty, and the *Works* of his Hands. By *Sin*, we were become Objects of his *Wrath* and *Displeasure*. By obeying the gracious Terms of the *Gospel of Christ*, we are *not only* restored again to the Favour of God, as of a merciful and tender Father; but our nature is more-over *exalted* by him to some similitude with *His*, who was in a singular manner the *Son of God*, and yet condescended to become our Elder Brother, by being made in the likeness of *Men*. He voluntarily became himself the *Son of Man*; and as many as received him, to them gave he power that They should become the Sons of God. He has received them as *Joint Heirs* with himself, in his Father's Kingdom; And God, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has begotten them again (as St. Peter expresses it) unto a *lively hope*, (that is, unto the Hope of eternal Life,) by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He hath caused them to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the *First-born among Many Brethren*. And for this cause, saith St. Paul, Heb. ii. 11. Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren. Nay, the same Apostle, in a most elegant and lively manner, carrying the same figure of speech still higher, Eph. v. 30. *We are members*, says he, *of his Body, of his Flesh and of his Bones*. Those who never had the Knowledge of the Gospel, are God's children by creation;

in such a sense as St. Luke says of *Adam*, that he was the *Son of God*. And with regard to These, the *Judge of the whole Earth will do what is Right*, and with *Equity shall be judge the Nations*. But as to his *Free Gifts*, he is still always at liberty to do what he pleases with his own: And in that Kingdom which he has appointed to his Son Jesus Christ, he may appoint whom he himself thinks fit, to sit on his right hand and on his left. He may *have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, and *compassion on whom he will have compassion*. The meaning is; not, that God will act arbitrarily and without Reason; as some have absurdly understood these words: But that He, and He only, is the competent, proper, and unerring Judge, upon what Persons, and on what Conditions, 'tis fit for him to bestow his Favours. And in and through Christ, he may give power, upon what Terms and Conditions he pleases, to such as shall attain to those Conditions, to become in a *peculiar manner the Children of God*; and if *Children, then Heirs*; *Heirs of God*, and *Joint Heirs with Christ*.

It remains, in the

3^d and last place, THAT I consider in what sense the Apostle here affirms, that the *Spirit of God*, the *Spirit itself*, beareth witness with Our Spirit, if we be good Christians, that these Characters do truly belong to us. For the clearer explication of which assertion, I observe

1st, THAT nothing can be more absurd, nothing can be more contrary to the Whole Tenour of the Gospel, than the Notions of those men, who take their own *Enthusiastick imaginations* to be the Testimony of the Spirit of God. Such persons judge not of the Tree, by its Fruit; They compare not the
Course

Course of their Lives, with the Rule of God's Commandments; They judge not of their being spiritual persons, or having the Spirit of Christ, by their practice of those Virtues, which the Scripture calls *bringing forth the Fruits of the Spirit*: But they have a strong, confident Conceit, that they are the elect, the chosen people of God; and the mere strength of this groundless imagination, they apprehend to be *the Spirit of God bearing witness with their Spirit, that they are the Children of God*. But This is so senseless a notion, so manifestly destructive of all Virtue, and of all the true difference between Good and Evil; that it needs barely be mentioned among persons of common Understanding, to expose the Folly of it. Wherefore

2dly, IN the *Apostles days*, the *miraculous Gifts and Graces of the Spirit*, made evident by their *real and visible Effects*, as in That great Instance of the Gift of Tongues bestowed as upon This day, were undeniable Testimonies, of the Spirit of God being given to those persons, in whom those Effects appeared. Not that all who were endued even with miraculous Gifts, were consequently good and sincere Christians: But these Gifts, to those who beheld them, were evident Attestations of the Spirit, to the Truth of the *Gospel*; And to the *Persons themselves*, on whom those Gifts were bestowed, if they were conscious in their own Hearts of their being sincere in their Profession, and virtuous in their Practice, then these Gifts were indeed *the Spirit of God bearing witness with Their Spirit that they were the Children of God*. But

3dly, BOTH in the *Apostles days*, and in all succeeding generations, even to the end of the World;

the several *Declarations* which the Spirit of God hath made, by the *Prophets* in the *Old Testament*, and by *Christ and his Apostles* in the *New*; compared with the verdict of our own Consciences, concerning the agreeableness of our Actions to those declarations; these are the Testimony of *the Spirit itself bearing witness with Our Spirit, that we are the Children of God*. The Promises of God made to men in Christ, and established upon the Terms of the Gospel, are represented in the *New Testament* as being *Sealed*, or *confirmed by Covenant*, to us in Baptism: And therefore, speaking concerning Baptized Converts, 2 Cor. i. 22. *God, saith St. Paul, hath also Sealed us, and given the Earnest of the Spirit in our Hearts*. Consequently they who make good This obligation, by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit in the suitable Practice of a Virtuous Life; These have the Seal or Earnest of the Spirit: 2 Tim. ii. 19. *The Foundation of God standeth sure, having This Seal, — Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity: And, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are Sealed unto the day of Redemption*. The Testimony of a good Conscience, is, in the language of the Text, the *Witness of our own Spirit*; And the Agreement of this Testimony of our own Conscience, with the Revealed Declarations of the Will of God, when carefully and duly compared together, is what the Apostle here styles the *Spirit of God bearing witness with Our Spirit, that we are the Children of God*.

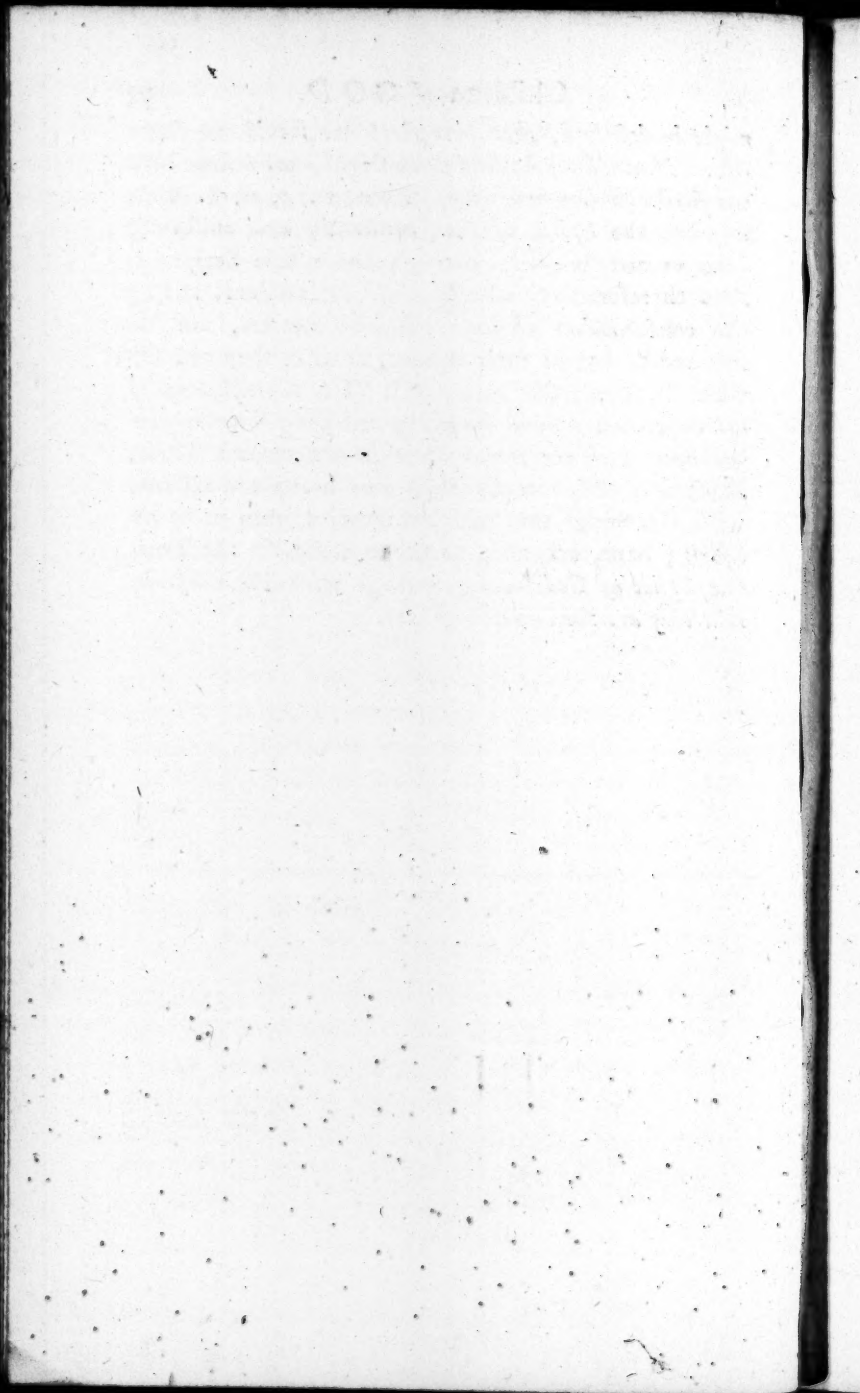
By this *One* observation, the whole Discourse of the Apostle in this chapter becomes very plain and intelligible: And at the same time, by the *whole* tenour of his discourse in this chapter, is *this* clearly
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confirmed to be the true meaning of the Text. *Ver.*

1. *There is now*, says he, *no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*: That is, who are guilty of no debauchery or vicious Practices, but live in the regular practise of those moral virtues, which he elsewhere by name calls *the Fruits of the Spirit*. For to be carnally (that is, viciously) minded, (ver. 6.) is death; but to be spiritually (that is, virtuously) minded, is life and peace. Ver. 8. So then they that are in the Flesh, (they that are under the power, and live in the practise, of any known Sin,) cannot please God: And (Ver. 9.) if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, (that is, if any man who professeth the Name of Christ, yet departeth not from iniquity, which is the Seal upon which the Foundation or Covenant of God standeth sure; If any man in This sense hath not the Spirit of Christ,) he is none of his. For if ye live after the Flesh, ver. 13. ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, (that is, as many as are prevailed upon by the Motives of the Gospel to live answerably to their Holy profession,) they are the Sons of God, ver. 14. And that they are so, they may certainly know, by these Fruits of the Spirit appearing in the whole course of their lives, compared with the Declarations of the Spirit made in the Gospel; even as certainly as a Tree is known by its Fruit. For Thus, adds the Apostle in the Text, *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; and if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint Heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.*

THE reason of his annexing these *last* words concerning our *Suffering* with Christ, is, because in the whole System of moral Virtues which are the Fruits of the Spirit, there is no one that affords a more certain Mark or Testimony of Sincerity ; there is no one, to which a man's own *Spirit* or Conscience beareth witness with more confidence, or to which All the Declarations of the *Spirit* of God bear witness with greater Clearness and Assurance ; than to this virtue of Chusing to run the hazard of Suffering at any time for Truth and Righteousness. 2 Tim. ii. 11. *It is a faithful Saying, If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him ; If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.* Wherefore, think it not strange, — saith St. Peter, but rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's Sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding Joy. (1 Pet. iv. 13.) In the Apostles days, Suffering for or with Christ, signified being persecuted for the Profession of Christianity in general. In later Ages, since the religion of Christ has in Name and Form been professed among the Nations, Persecution has more frequently been brought upon men for adhering to some particular Truths, and for opposing some particular Corruptions in practice. For, not only the Apostles suffered in *Their* days, but many also of the Best men in *our* days ; yea, and All, in All days, says the Apostle St. Paul, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. But whether they be persecuted by men, or no ; yet if by steadfastly resisting the Temptations of Sin, they be planted together with Christ in the likeness of his Death, they shall be also in the likewise of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the Body of Sin might

might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve Sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, Rom. vi. 5, 6, 8. This is what the Spirit of God constantly and uniformly declares and testifies, through the whole Scripture. And therefore they who by these declarations, and by the consideration of these religious motives, are influenced to live in such manner, as that they can say with St. Paul, Our rejoicing is This, the testimony of our conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity — we have had our conversation in the world; These, as often as they compare their own hearts and actions, with the things that God has revealed unto us by his Spirit; have, according to the expression in the Text, the Spirit of God bearing witness with Their Spirit, that they are the Children of God.



S E R M O N V.

Of Loving G O D.

MATT. xxii. 37, 38.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind; This is the First and Great Commandment.

IN these words there is observable; 1st, The Duty enjoined; *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: 2^{dly}, The Circumstances requisite, to make the performance of this Duty *acceptable and complete*; Thou shalt love him, *with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind*: 3^{dly}, The Weight, and Importance, of the Duty; It is *the First and Great Commandment*.

I. THE Duty enjoined, is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*. A Duty, in every man's mouth, of all Religions, and in all Sects: But, upon what Ground its Obligation is founded, and in what particulars the rational *Practise* of it consists; is not so clearly and universally understood. Men often talk very earnestly of *loving God*, while at the same time they in their doctrine represent him as the most *baseful* Being in the Universe; cruel, and partial; arbitrary, and tyrannical;

nical ; showing favour to some, and making others miserable, for no other reason, but because he has absolute and irresistible Power. But what such persons speak concerning *loving* of God, is evidently nothing but mere *Forms* of *empty words*, without any meaning or signification at all ; because there is in their Minds *no real Object*, upon which the Love they speak of can be fixt. And where the *Root* thus is rottenness ; (to use the Prophet *Isaiab's* Comparison,) what wonder if the *Blossom*, and the *Fruit*, accordingly goes up as *Dust* ? what wonder if the expressions of their *Love* towards God, end in nothing but peevishness, contentiousness, and perhaps *Hatred* towards their *Brethren* ? A *True Love* of God, must be founded upon a *right Sense*, of his *Perfections* being really amiable in themselves, and beneficial to Us : And such a *Love* of God, will of Necessity show forth itself, in our endeavouring to *practise* the same virtues ourselves, and exercise them towards others, which we profess to *love* and admire in Him.

ALL *Perfection*, is in itself lovely, and amiable in the very nature of the Thing : The Virtues and Excellencies of Men remote in History, from whom we can receive no personal Advantage, excite in us an *Esteem* whether we will or no : And every good mind, when it reads or thinks upon the character of an *Angel*, loves the Idea, though it has no present communication with the Subject, to whom so lovely a character belongs : Much more, the inexhaustible Fountain of All Perfections ; of Perfections without number, and without limit ; the Center, in which All Excellencies unite, in which All Glory resides, and from which every good thing proceeds ; cannot but be the Supreme Object of Love, to a reasonable and
intelli-

intelligent Mind. Even *supposing* we ourselves received no Benefit therefrom, yet infinite *Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom* in conjunction, are lovely in the very *Idea*, and amiable even in the *abstract Imagination*. But That which makes these Perfections most *truly and substantially*, most *really and permanently*, the Object of our Love; is the *Application* of them to *ourselves*, and our *own* more immediate *Concerns*; by the consideration of their being joined also with those *relative and moral* Excellencies, which make them at the same time no less *beneficial* to Us, than they are excellent *absolutely* in their own Nature. Then is God the *Complete* Object of Love, when together with the Notion of infinite Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom, we consider him moreover as actually *governing the World*; and when, in the *exercise* of that Dominion over us, we consider his *Truth and Faithfulness*, his *Justice and Impartiality*, his *Equity, Mercy, and Goodness* towards his Creatures; When we consider his Goodness in giving us *Being*, and a *Being so excellent*; his Care, in making such plentiful Provision, for our *temporal Preservation*, and for our *eternal Happiness*; his Mercy, in sending his Son to redeem us from Death, and to procure Pardon even for the *greatest* of Sinners upon their true Repentance: When we consider *these* things, I say, *Then* is it that God truly appears the complete Object of Love: For so our Saviour himself teaches us to argue; *Luk. vii. 47.* To whom *much* is forgiven, he will love the more; and the Apostle St. *John, 1 Joh. iv. 19.* We (says he) *love Him, because He first loved Us.*

THIS therefore is the true Ground and Foundation, of our Love towards God. But *wherein* this love towards God *consists*, and by what *Acts* it is most properly

perly exercis'd, has sometimes been very much misunderstood. Men of strong Passions and warm Imaginations, have been too apt to place it in a mere *Enthusiastick* zeal of *Affection*, a sort of *Scholastick* Speculation, unintelligible and fruitless; seated in the *Fancy* only, instead of the *Understanding*; and having no Effect upon the *Will* or *Actions*, in the *general* course of a Man's Life. By which means, they make the *Love of God*, a thing entirely *distinct* from the *Love of Virtue and Righteousness*: Whereas the Scripture always speaks of them as being *One* and *the Same*; judging of Men constantly by that *never-failing* Rule, of discerning the Tree by its Fruits; and always representing men to have just so much *Love* towards *God* in their *Hearts*, as they pay *Obedience* to his *Laws* in their *Actions*. The only Distinction found in Scripture, is, that our *Love of God*, is sometimes used in a more *restrained* Sense, as distinguished from the *Love of our Neighbour*; and then it signifies, that which is usually called our *Duty towards God*; worshipping the *True God*, and *Him Only*, in opposition to all *False Gods*; and placing our *whole Faith and Trust* in him accordingly. At other times 'tis used in a more *general* sense, as including our whole *Duty both towards God* and towards *Men*; righteousness towards *Men* being inseparable from a true *Love towards God*; and it being impossible that he who loveth *God*, should not love his *Brother* also. But in *Both* these Senses, whether it be understood according to the more *limited* or the more *general* interpretation, it *always* signifies a moral *Virtue*, not a *Passion or Affection*; and is therefore in Scripture always with great Care explained and declared to mean, the *Obedience of a Virtuous Life*, in opposition to the

Enthusiasm of a vain imagination. In the *old Testament*, *Moses*, in his last exhortation to the *Israelites*, thus expresses it; *Deut. x. 12.* And now *Israel*, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to love him? And what is loving him? why, he tells them in the very next words, 'tis to walk in all his ways, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy Soul, to keep the Commandments of the Lord, and his Statutes which I command thee this day for thy good. In the *New Testament*, our Saviour still more distinctly expresses the same thing, inculcating and repeating it in such a manner, as shows plainly his foreseeing at that time, in his own mind, how apt men would be to misunderstand it: *Joh. xiv. 15, 21.* If ye love me, saith he, keep my Commandments: He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me. And in his prophecy concerning the Signs of the End of the World, he puts Love towards God, as the opposite to iniquity; thereby plainly declaring it, to mean the same as Virtue: *Matt. xxiv. 12.* Because iniquity shall abound, the Love, saith he, of Many shall wax cold. And the beloved Disciple, who, as he leaned more nearly upon his Master's Breast, so he seems in this matter to have been more particularly inspired with his Master's Sentiments; Who so, says he, keepeth his word, in Him, verily is the Love of God perfected; Hereby know we that we are in Him: (1 *Joh. ii. 5.*) For This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, 1 *Joh. v. 3.* And again, 2 *Joh. vi.* This, says he, is Love, that we walk after his Commandments. And, effectually to prevent such Men's enthusiastick Notions of Religion, as judge of their Love towards God by any empty Speculation,

by any Warmth of Zeal in matters of Opinion, by any Passion or Affection whatsoever, wherewith the Mind or Imagination may without any real Fruit of Virtue and Righteousness, fancy itself transported; the same Apostle frequently gives us this *one sure* rule, in which there can be *no* Deception; that we measure the Truth of our Love towards God, by the extent and proportion of our Love towards our Neighbour. 1 Joh. iii. 17. *Who so seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?* Again, ch. iv. 12, 20. *No man hath seen God at any time; If we love one another, God dwelleth in Us, and his Love is perfected in us: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?* The Argument is: God, who is *invisible*, can *no otherwise* be shown to be the Object of our Love, than by our *delighting* to obey and imitate him, in Acts of Righteousness and Charity and universal Good-Will, towards Mankind who are *visible* and always *with us*. This Commandment have we from Him, *that he who loveth God, love his Brother also:* (ver. 21.) That is, that whosoever pretends to love God, should *prove* the Truth of what he professes, by his behaviour towards Men. For by This we know, (as the same Apostle goes on, ch. v. 2.) *that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his Commandments.* The words, from their connexion with what went before, seem to be transposed; and that they should not be read thus, *that we love the children of God, when we love God*, but on the other side, *by This we know that we love God, when we love the children of God, and keep his Command-*
ments.

ments. Those who place the Sum of their religion, in imposing upon men blind Notions and unintelligible Opinions; and *bate* and *persecute* All who differ from them; and, by endeavouring to *compel* Others into their own hypocrisy, fill the World with cruelty, violence and oppression; These persons, I say, do in one *respect* act extreme wisely; that they discourage men, as much as they can, from reading and studying the Scriptures with their own eyes; least they should There see it set forth, in so *plain*, so *clear*, so *bright*, so *perpetual* and *unavoidable* a *Light*, how *different*, how *Contrary*, *Their Spirit* is, to the Spirit of *Christianity*, which is the Spirit of *Love*. For, if they who *rightly* teach the *true doctrine* of Christ, shall yet be bid to *depart from him*, if in their own private lives they be *workers of iniquity*; much *more* shall the same Sentence be pronounced on those, the manner of whose very *teaching* is *itself* a work of unrighteousness, violence and oppression. But to proceed: As the *Scripture* thus *expressly*, so the *reason and Nature of the thing itself* no less *plainly*, shows; in opposition to all Superstitious Notions; that *Love towards God*, and *Virtue or Righteousness of Life*, are in reality only two different *Names* of One and the Same *Thing*. For, *What* is rational *Love*, but a *Desire to please* the person beloved, and a *Complacency or Satisfaction in* pleasing him? To *love God* therefore, is to have a sincere *Desire* of obeying his *Laws*, and a *Delight or Pleasure in the Conscience of That Obedience*. Wherever *This Obedience* is not found; Men may talk what they please, of *ardent Love and Devotion* towards God, of the *highest Zeal* and even *Fury* for his *Service*; it is *all* nothing but most *certain* hypocrisy. For whatever specious pretenses the

Wit of Man may invent, our Saviour's Argument will for ever stand good; *men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles.* The Tree will always be known by its Fruit. Love towards God, will always show forth itself in doing his Will. *If a man love me, saith our Saviour, he will keep my words,* Joh. xiv. 23. To love God, is to love Goodness, Righteousness, Charity and Truth; If therefore to love these Virtues, and live at the same time in the Practise of all the contrary Vices, be a Contradiction; for the same reason it follows, that, to pretend to love God, and at the same time practise the Vices which he hates, is a Contradiction also. As He only who doth righteousness, is righteous; so He only who doth what is pleasing to God, can be said to love him. To love God, and yet delight to disobey him; is a manifest inconsistency: And therefore the Psalmist's Admonition, is both an *Argument of Reason*, and a *Rule* by which to Try men; Ps. xcvi. 10. *Ye that love the Lord, see that ye hate the Thing which is Evil.* In Scripture, wicked men and evil Spirits, are elegantly stiled Enemies and Haters of God; not that they oppose or withstand his Power; for That is impossible; but because they hate his Laws, and delight in what he forbids: In like manner therefore on the other side, Love towards God, is also impossible to be expressed by any Benefit we can do to Him, but can be testified only by our Love of Righteousness and by our Practise of Virtue. Even to an Earthly Superiour, to a Parent or a Prince, Love can no otherwise be shown from a Child or a Servant; than by chearfully observing the Laws, and promoting the true Interest, of the Government he is under. There is This difference only; that Earthly Superiours are then only
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to be obeyed, when they command what we see to be just and right: But God, who, being infallible, can never command what is wrong, is for that reason absolutely to be obeyed in *all* things: Only, to prevent the Errors and the Frauds of *Men*, whether *impious* or *pious* Frauds, very *great* heed is to be taken, in matters of weight and importance, that whatever is pretended to be a Command of *God*, be really and indeed Such.

Lastly: THAT the *Love of God* and the *Practise of Righteousness*, are one and the same thing; appears from those Texts, wherein all *Relation of Men to God*, is declared to be founded upon *Virtue* only. Thus the Title of *Sons of God*, *Rom. viii. 14. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God:* and *Phil. ii. 15. That ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God.* The Title of *Friendship* likewise: *Jam. ii. 23. It was imputed unto Abraham for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God:* He was called; that is, he was so stiled in the *old Testament* by God himself; *Is. xli. 8;* and *2 Cbr. xx. 7. Thou, Israel, art my Servant, the Seed of Abraham my Friend.* Our Saviour, gives the same Title to his *Apostles*, upon the same ground; *Joh. xv. 14. ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* And still more emphatically, *Matt. xii. 50. Whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother and Sister and Mother.* Christ acknowledges no relation, but what arises from religion only; nor regards any declaration of *Love* towards him, other than that of Obedience to his Commands in the Gospel. St. Paul elegantly pursues the same Similitude, *2 Cor. v. 16. Henceforth know we no man after the Flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the*
Flesh,

Flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more: His meaning is; All temporal personal Knowledge and Friendship, such as was between Christ and his natural Relation here upon Earth, now disappears; and no man knows Christ, or is known of him, any otherwise than in proportion as he obeys his Laws. The like is to be observed, concerning That Title given to the Jews, of being God's peculiar people: For They only were so in the spiritual and religious sense, who in Practise not who in Profession, served the True God. Gal. iii. 28; and Col. iii. 11. There is neither Jew, nor Greek; there is neither male, nor female; neither Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ, (that is, Obedience to Christ,) is all in all. And ch. v. 6; and 1 Cor. vii. 19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the Keeping of the Commandments of God. And the same is fully expressed in that declaration of John the Baptist, when he says, that even out of the Stones of the street, God could raise up children unto Abraham: Children unto Him, in the spiritual and best sense, who for his exemplary obedience had this Testimony given him, that he is called in Scripture (Rom. iv. 16.) the Father of the Faithful.

Now from this Account which has been given, of the true Nature of Love towards God; it will be easy for us to correct the Errors, which Men have sometimes fallen into in Both Extremes. Some have been very confident of their Love towards God, from a mere warmth of superstitious zeal and enthusiastick affection, without any great care to bring forth in their Lives the Fruits of Righteousness and true Holiness. And the Error of these men may be corrected, by considering, that God being essentially just and good, holy and true,

true, and of all other moral Perfections; 'tis consequently evident, that unless they consider him under *These Characters* which are inseparable from his Nature, and unless they accordingly love (and themselves imitate) these Virtues; 'tis not *God* whom they are zealous for, but a mere *abstract Notion*, a *Phantom* only of their own Imagination.

ON the contrary; Others there are, who though they really *love*, and fear, and serve God, in the course of a virtuous and religious life; yet, because they feel not in themselves that *warmth* of affection, which many Enthusiasts pretend to; therefore they are afraid and suspect, that they do not *love God* sincerely, as they ought. Now the Error of these pious persons is to be corrected, by considering, that there is *no* other Mark so infallible of the Goodness of a Tree, as the *Fruit* which it brings forth. If they live in *Obedience* to the Commands of God, they need *no other* evidence of the Sincerity of their Hearts towards him: For all *other* Signs may possibly be erroneous; but *This*, is the *very thing signified* itself. Love of Goodness, Righteousness, and Truth; is Love of God: For, *God* is *Goodness and Truth*: And He who loves these Virtues, which are the moral Perfections of the divine Nature, does therefore love God most perfectly; because he loves *those* Excellencies, for the *Sake* of which God expects that we should love him above all things.

BUT further: There are *Some* persons of This sort, who are fearful that their Love towards God is not entire and perfect, and that they do not love God as the Chief Good, if they obey and serve him for the hope of *Reward*. But This also, is a great mistake: For as Happiness, no less than *Holiness*, is *essential* in the
divine

divine Nature; so in all *inferiour* Beings, the proper Reward of *Virtue* is inseparably desirable with *Virtue* itself: And not the Desire of *Heaven*, which is the Perfection of *Virtue*, but only the Desire of *Sinful Pleasure*, which is destructive of *Virtue*, is inconsistent with, and diminishes from, our *Love of God*. The Scripture expressly declares, that he who cometh to God, not only may, but *must* believe him to be a *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek him: (Heb. vi. 6.) That *Abraham* accordingly, That Great Father of the Faithful, looked for a City which bath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God: (ver. 10, 14.) That *Moses*, had respect unto the recompense of Reward. (ver. 26.) That the *Martyrs* suffered in hope, that they might obtain a better Resurrection: (ver. 35.) That our Lord himself, endured the Cross, for the joy that was set before him: (ch. xii. 2.) And that the end of All good mens faith, is the Salvation of their Souls, even joy unspeakable and full of Glory. (1 Pet. i. 8, 9.) The Hope of which Joy, the Apostle in that very Verse, not only supposes to be consistent with, but speaks of it as being, *itself*, our *Love of Christ*.

II. HAVING thus at large explained the Duty in-joined in the Text, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: I proceed now in the 2d place, to consider briefly the Circumstances requisite, to make the performance of this Duty acceptable and complete: Thou shalt love him with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. In St. Luke it is, somewhat more distinctly; with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind. (ch. x. 27.) Which words, though sometimes indeed used promiscuously; yet, when thus put together in order, seem intended to express, after a more distinct manner,

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the requisite *Circumstances* of *That Obedience*, which is the proper Evidence of our Love towards God. And

1st, I *T* must be *Sincere*: We must love or obey him with all our Heart. 'Tis not the *external action* only, but the *inward affection of the Mind* principally, that God regards: An affection of Mind, which influences all a man's actions *in secret*, as well as *in publick*; (Mat. vi.) which determines the person's *true Character*, or denomination; and distinguishes *him* who really is a Servant of God, from *him* who only *seems* or *appears* to be so. It was the character of the *Jews* of old, and is *now* of too great a part of Christians, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. *With their Mouth this people shows much Love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness*; i. e. after their Sinful Pleasures.

2^{dly}, Our Obedience must be *Universal*: We must love God with all our Soul, or with our whole Soul. He does not love God, in the Scripture-sense; who obeys him in *some* instances only and not in *all*. No man, says our Saviour, *can serve two masters*: (Mat. vi. 24.) And, *if any man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John ii. 15. And Jam. iv. 4. *Whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God*. The meaning of these passages, is not, that he who Truly loves God, must consequently *wholly neglect*, and have *no regard at all* to any thing else; but, that nothing else must *so* possess our affections, as to *interfere* with our Duty, when they come in competition; and thereby render our Hearts (as the Scripture expresses it,) *not right* or *not whole* with the Lord. Thus Saul was tempted to spare the *best* of the *Amalekite's* Goods, expressly contrary to God's Command: And the *Jews*, under Pretence of the *Corban*, of giving somewhat to the service of the *Temple*, excused themselves

selves from providing for their necessitous *Parents* : And *Many* who have zealously taught the doctrine of Christ, shall at the day of Judgment be bid to *depart from him*, because they have allowed themselves in the practise of some unforsaken *iniquities*. The Psalmist places his confidence in *This* only, that he *had respect unto All God's commandments*, Ps. cxix. 6. Generally speaking, most men's Temptation lies principally in some *One Particular Instance* : And *This* is the proper *Tryal*, of the person's *Obedience*, or of his *Love* towards God. If he overcomes in *This* instance, then may he *have confidence towards God* ; But if he fails *here*, and continues so to do, he is guilty of *All*. By forsaking the Sin that *most easily* besets us, we must endeavour to improve daily and grow in grace ; aiming at the character given in the gospel to *Zacharias*, that he was *perfect, walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless*. The meaning is ; not that our Obedience can in this life be *indeed sinless* ; but that we must be *sincere* in endeavouring to avoid *all Sin*, according to the measure and possibilities of our *present* frailty ; 'till at last we be presented really *faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding Joy*.

3dly, Our Obedience must be *constant* and *persevering* in Time, as well as *Universal* in its *Extent* : We must love God with all our Strength ; *persevering* in our Duty, *without fainting*. *He that endureth to the end, saith our Saviour, the same shall be saved* ; and *He that overcometh, shall inherit all things* ; and, *we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end*. The Scripture notion of Obedience is, *walking in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life*, Luke i. 75. The meaning is, not so as never to fall into any Sin,
but

but so as never to apostatize from our Duty by falling finally into *any* course of Sin. *The just shall live by faith*; but if any man draw back, says God, *my Soul shall have no pleasure in him*. For Christianity is a warfare, wherein we must not only fight, but so fight, as to overcome; and a race, wherein we must not only run, but so run, as to obtain.

4thly, OUR Obedience to God, ought to be *willing and chearful*: We must love him with all our Mind. Ps. v. 12. *They that love thy Name, will be joyful in thee*: And St. Paul, among the fruits of the Spirit, reckons up peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, This ought not to be matter of scruple to any weak and sincere mind: For Obedience to the Commands of God, *whatever* principle it proceeds from, even though it be but Fear only, will be accepted unto Salvation. But Virtue becomes *more perfect*, when 'tis made easy by Love, and by habitual Practice incorporated as it were into a man's very nature and temper. For so the Scripture represents *Angels*, as rejoicing and delighting to perform their Lord's pleasure; And our Saviour declares that 'twas his *meat and drink*, to do the Will of his Father which is in Heaven. Which Examples when we can in any tolerable degree imitate, then is fulfilled in us the observation of St. John, (1 Joh. iv. 18.) that *perfect Love casteth out Fear*; and That of St. Paul, Rom. viii. 15. that *we have not received the Spirit of bondage to Fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and 2 Tim. i. 7. *God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of love, and of a sound mind*.

THESE are the *Circumstances* requisite to make the performance of this Duty acceptable and complete: We must love the Lord our God, with all our Heart,

with all our *Soul*, with all our *Strength*, and with all our *Mind*: The

III^d and last thing observable in the Text, is the *Weight and Importance* of the Duty; It is the *First and Great Commandment*. The Reason is, because 'tis the *Foundation of all*; and, without *Regard to God*, there can be *no Religion*. Not that *Virtue*, at any time, or in any person whatsoever, can be *not praise-worthy*; much less, that, in those who have not a right knowledge of God, even virtuous Actions themselves are (as some have very *unreasonably* affirmed) only *splendid Sins*; but that there is no *security*, no certain *depending* upon such virtues, as arise merely accidentally from *natural goodness of Temper*, and are not built upon a firm and settled persuasion, that God does Now govern, and will finally judge the World. The House, is good; but it is built (according to our Saviour's comparison) upon the *Sand only*, and not upon a *Rock*. 'Tis *Faith* only, that *overcomes the World*: Nothing but a steady Belief of a Judgment to come, and of God's being a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, can be effectual to conquer the Temptations of Sin. *This* Faith therefore, that we may all hold fast, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

S E R M O N VI.

Of the FEAR of G O D.

JOB xxiii. 15.

*Therefore am I troubled at his presence : When
I consider, I am afraid of him.*

IN This Chapter *Job* gives a noble Description of the Sense he had upon his Mind, of the invisible Omnipresence and Omniscience of God. *Ver. 8.* Behold, I go forward, but he is not there : and backward, but I cannot perceive him : On the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him : But he knoweth the way that I take. To a man of Virtue and Integrity, the consideration of This great Truth is a solid Ground of real and lasting Satisfaction. He knoweth the way that I take :—My foot hath held his steps ; his way have I kept, and not declined : Neither have I gone back from the Commandment of his Lips : I have esteemed the Words of his Mouth, more than my necessary Food, *ver. 11.* In times of Affliction particularly, 'tis an inexpressible Support, if a man can be able to say with this exemplary person, *ver. 3.* O that I knew where I might find him ! that I might come even to his Seat ! I would order my Cause before him, and fill my Mouth with Arguments.—Will he plead against me

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with his great Power ? No ; but he would put Strength in me. — He knoweth the Way that I take : When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold. Nevertheless, though the Hope signified by these high Expressions, is indeed a well-grounded Hope ; and what the Apostle St. John calls, an assuring of our Hearts before God ; (1 Joh. iii. 19.) Yet considering the infinite Purity of the Divine Nature, and the Frailness of this our mortal State, and the unprofitableness even of our best Services, and our aptness to impose upon ourselves, and to deceive through carelessness even our Own Hearts ; so that though a man be not conscious to himself of any great Wickedness, yet is he not hereby justified, but he that justifies him, is the Lord : (1 Cor. iv. 4.) And considering also, that, in the nature of Things, there cannot but be many Secrets in the Dispensations of Providence, and in God's Government of the Universe, unsearchable to our short and limited Understandings ; 'Tis not without great reason that Job immediately corrects himself in the words next following ; ver. 13. But he is in One Mind, and who can turn him ? — For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me ; and many such things are with him. Therefore am I troubled at his presence ; when I consider, I am afraid of him. The Expressions are of the same import, as those in the Ninth chapter, ver. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not ; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not. Behold, he taketh away ; who can hinder him ? Who will say unto him, what dost thou ? — Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer ; but I would make Supplication to my Judge.

THE words of my Text ; *I am troubled at his Presence ; when I consider, I am afraid of him ;* have, in the place they stand, a particular Reference to These

Considerations. But I shall take them at this time in their *larger* sense, as containing this more *general* and very important Proposition; that the *Fear of God* is the Result of *Consideration*; the Result of *Attention*, and true *Reason*; not of empty *Imagination*, and vain *Apprehensions*. *When I Consider, I am afraid of him.*

By the *Fear of God*, I would be understood to mean, not the Superstitious *Dread* of an *arbitrary* or *cruel Being*; but That *Awe* and *Regard*, which necessarily arises in the Mind of every man, who believes and habitually considers himself as living and acting in the sight of an Omnipresent Governour, of perfect Justice, Holiness and Purity; who sees every Thought, as well as every Action; who cannot be imposed upon, by Any Hypocrisy; who, as certainly as there is any Difference between Good and Evil, cannot but approve the one, and detest the other; and whose Government, as certainly as he has any Power at all, consists in rewarding what he approves, and punishing what he hates. Of such a Governour as This, though we are sure he is indued with infinite Goodness, yet may it justly be said, with the greatest Reason, and without any tendency to Superstition; *When I consider, I am afraid of him.*

THIS *Fear of God*, is the *Foundation* of Religion. For though *Virtue* is indeed amiable, *absolutely*, in its own Nature; and, if the World could possibly be supposed to subsist without the *Government*, and even without the *Being* of God, still the nature of *Good and Evil* would be what it is, and *Virtue* would be *in itself* unalterably excellent, and *Vice* for ever blame-worthy; Yet the great *Support* of *Virtue* among *Men*, is the Sense upon their Minds of a Supreme Governour and Judge of the Universe, who will finally and effectually reward what is in itself essentially worthy of reward,

and *punish* what is *worthy of punishment*. To a *perfect* and *unerring* Mind, incapable of being deceived, and which is exalted above all possible temptation ; to such a one, the *intrinsic Reason of Things*, the *essential Excellency* of Truth and Right, is in itself a steady and always sufficient Motive of Action. But *Men* ; who, when they *know* what is Right, and necessarily *approve* it, yet at the same time find *another Law in their Members warring against the Law of their Mind*, urging them with strong *Passions*, and uneasy *Appetites* ; and these solicited moreover with perpetual Temptations from *without*, with Allurements of *Pleasure and Profit*, with Baits of *Power and Ambition*, with *Examples* of a degenerate and corrupt World, and with *Threatnings* also of perpetual *Persecutions* in different kinds, if they adhere steadfastly to the Interests of Truth and Virtue : To such Beings as these, I say ; to finite, changeable, and fallible Creatures ; 'tis very necessary, that the *eternal intrinsic Reason of Things*, the *essential and unalterable Excellency of Truth and Right*, considered as a *Motive of Action*, should be *supported and strengthened* by a constant and lively Sense upon their Minds, of an universal Supreme Governour ; who being essentially the Fountain of all Perfection, the *Truth and Reason of Things* and the *unalterable Right of every Case* are consequently the *eternal Laws* of his Kingdom : Which, by his universal Power and Government over all, he will as certainly support and maintain ; finally rewarding Virtue, and punishing Vice ; as 'tis certain there *Is* a Difference between Good and Evil, and that infinite Wisdom cannot be *insensible* of That Difference. A firm and settled Persuasion of the reality and certainty of this great Truth, that we are continually under the inspection of *such* a Supreme Governour and Judge ;

Judge ; of an omnipresent Spirit, *in whom we live and move and have our Being*, and to whom our very Thoughts are open as our Actions ; cannot but fill the mind of every *considerate* Person, with a just Awe and Fear of him : *When I consider, I am afraid of him* : Afraid, not as of an arbitrary and tyrannical Power ; but as of a just and powerful and wise Governour, whose Laws are reasonable and necessary to be obeyed, and from whose just displeasure the Disobedient can by No Power or Artifice be protected.

THE Ground of *This Fear*, the Text tells us, is Reason and Consideration : *When I Consider, I am afraid of him*. Atheistical and profane men, suppose on the contrary, that the Ground of this Fear is *Timorousness of Temper, Superstition, Customary Tradition, or political Fiction*. 'Tis of infinitely great Moment, to determine *which* of these two is the Truth ; And therefore I shall consider distinctly the very different Grounds, Characters, and Effects, of Religion and Superstition ; and how these Two things, which Atheistical and corrupt Minds would fain imagine to be the same, may be distinguished from each other.

1. IN the first place, as to the Ground and Foundation of Religion. That there is an essential Difference between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice ; is what every man as clearly discerns by the natural and necessary Perception of his own Mind and Conscience, as his Eyes see the Difference between Light and Darkness. 'Tis not a man's particular Timorousness of Temper, 'tis not Customary Tradition from his Ancestors, 'tis not the imaginary Speculation of Philosophers, 'tis not the political Fiction of Governours, that makes him see when he is oppressed, defrauded, cheated, treated unjustly and injuriously ; that these Actions are in their

own nature *unrighteous*, and the *Person* who is guilty of them *worthy of Punishment*. Every man, of every degree of capacity, in every Age, and in every Nation, sees and feels this to be the Truth of Things ; And no *accidental Variety of Temper*, no *Tradition*, no *Philosophy*, no *Form of Government*, can either *alter* or *abolish* these Notions. The *Reasonings* and *Speculations* of *Men*, do not *make* things to be what they are ; but only help men to *discover* with greater Clearness, or to a deeper degree, what their *real intrinsic* Natures are. *Laws* likewise, do not *make* Virtue to be Virtue, or Vice to be Vice ; but only *inforce* or *discourage* the *Practise* of such things, as the very *making of a Law* always and necessarily *presupposes* to have been Fit or Unfit *before* the making of the Law : Because otherwise *all Laws* about *moral matters* would be *professedly* to *no Purpose*, and of *no Use*. There *may* perhaps be in some *Men*, and possibly in some whole *Nations*, for want of Attention and Consideration, a very great degree of *Ignorance*, in many *particular Instances*, of this natural and essential difference of Good and Evil ; (Though, I believe, no person, who had at all the use of his Reason, ever was so *universally* ignorant, as not to dislike and think *really blame-worthy* a wilful *Breach of Faith*, or an Act of *causeless Cruelty*.) But the *Ignorance*, be it in what degree it will, either of any *Man* or of any *Number of Men* ; makes no alteration at all, in the *Nature* and *Truth* of *Things* ; nor affords any Argument, against the *reality* of their *essential Differences*. Were there in nature *no real and unalterable* Difference, between Moral Good and Evil ; it would follow, not only that whole Nations might possibly be *ignorant* of This Distinction ; which is nothing to the purpose ; (for so they may be of the plainest Mathe-

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matical Truths, and yet those Truths not be at all the less certain :) But it would follow, that whole Nations might as *possibly*, with a full persuasion within themselves of the Strength and Clearness of their manner of reasoning and arguing, determine in all instances universally Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue, as *We* think we with reason determine the contrary: Nay, it would be as *easy*, and as *natural*, and as *probable* they should so determine, as that Nations should differ in the *Fashion* or *Colour* of their *Cloaths*, or in any other Circumstances of things by nature indifferent. Which since no man (I think) has ever been so absurd as to affirm; it follows undeniably, that That First Ground and Foundation of Religion, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, is laid *immutably* and *universally* in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things: Whereas all *Superstitions*, various always as the Motion of the Winds and Clouds, are notoriously founded only in *accidental Temper*, *customary Tradition*, or *political Fiction*.

AGAIN: That there is an *invisible Power* presiding over the Universe, (which is *Another* part of the prime Ground and Foundation of Religion;) The Belief, I say, of an *invisible Power* ruling over the Universe, and which will finally *support* Virtue and *punish* Wickedness; is a Belief arising from *Reason* and *Consideration*; which is directly contrary to the Essence of *Superstition*. The *visible Works* of Nature, every man by his own experience every day, perceives evidently to be the Effects of an *invisible Power*. The more *extensive*, and the more *exact*, any man's Observations are; the more Evidences he continually finds of the *reality* and of the *Greatness* of this *invisible Power*: But even to the *meanest Capacities*, and in the most *obvious Occur-*

rences of life, God has by no means *left himself without Witness*, causing his Sun to shine, and sending us Rain and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness. (Mat. v. 45. Acts xiv. 17.) The *Marvelousness* of the Works of Nature, shows the *Greatness* of this Power; and the *Regularity* and *Uniformity* of them shows it to be the Power of *One and the Same Agent*, acting or directing every where. The *Understanding* of this universal Governour, which is sufficient to direct the whole Frame of *Nature*; cannot be insensible of that Difference of *Moral Good* and *Evil*, which even to *Us* appears necessarily and essentially demonstrable. To expect therefore that this Supreme Being will judge according to *Right*, that is, according to the *necessary nature* of Things; In other words, To *fear* that he will punish us if we act unreasonably, and to *hope* for his Favour if we be Followers of Truth and Right; is the Voice of *Reason*, and not of *Superstition*.

Superstitious Apprehensions, arising in particular from *Timorousness of Temper*, teach men to fear they know not *what*, or to be afraid of God they know not *why*; to fear him, not as a *just and righteous Judge*, but merely as vested with *irresistible Power*; to fear him, not so as by That Fear to be deterred from unrighteous Practices, but so as to be perpetually commuting for a vicious Life with the repetition of unprofitable Ceremonies without number. *Superstitions* founded upon *Customary Tradition*, teach men to be afraid of things which have *no Existence*, or of *Beings* which have *no Power and Dominion* over us; to place *Religion* in Practices which have *no Tendency to Virtue*; to lay Stress upon *Opinions*, which have *no Sense* or *no Truth* in them; upon things, whereof no man
can

can give a rational Account, or, in St. Peter's language, *give an Answer to any one that asketh a Reason of the Hope or of the Fear that is in him.* (1 Pet. iii. 15.) Superstitions derived from political Fiction, teach men to make Religion consist in Parties and Factions; in things which, in different countries, are contrary to each other, and, in the same country, contrary at different Times; in things which promote not at all the Honour of God, nor universal Meekness and Good-will towards Men; but on the contrary, sometimes are directly destructive both of Truth and Charity.

INSTANCES of all these several kinds of Superstitions in the Heathen World, were their worshipping of *fictitious* Deities, instead of the Great God and Governour of the Universe, of whom by the Light of Nature and Reason they were not ignorant: And more particularly, their mixing sometimes barbarous and cruel, sometimes beastly and impure Rites, even amongst their sacred and religious Performances. In the Jewish Nation, the general and prevailing Superstition always was, their relying upon outward Forms and Ceremonies, (which ought not indeed to be left undone,) and laying the stress of Religion upon them, more than upon the weightier matters of the Law, Justice, Mercy, and Fidelity; (Mat. xxiii. 23.) of which, all external Purifications were but Shadows and Memorials. In the Christian World, Instances of no less shameful Superstitions, are, mens departing from the Everlasting Gospel, which requires us (Rev. xiv. 6, 7.) to worship him that made Heaven and Earth; and setting up the Worship of the Host, and of the Blessed Virgin, and of Angels, and Saints, and Relicks, and Images: Also relying upon Indulgences, Pilgrimages, Pro-

cessions,

cessions, Masses for the Dead, and the like; Nay, and upon the most ridiculously extravagant Absurdities in Belief, and the most inhumane Persecutions and Barbarities in Practice. All which things have no Foundation in Reason, nor any Appearance of being commanded of God. The true Religion of Christ, as taught by Himself and his Apostles, has nothing of This Sort in it; requiring nothing of us, but This most reasonable Service, that, in expectation of a righteous Judgment to come, we continually worship the God of the Universe; living in Sobriety, Righteousness, and Charity towards All men; and making constant Acknowledgments of the Divine Goodness and Compassion, in receiving Sinners to Repentance through the Atonement and Intercession of Christ. Than which Doctrine, nothing can be more firm in its Foundation, or more excellent in its Effects.

2. AND This is the Second great or characteristick Mark, by which Religion and Superstition may be distinguished from each other. As they differ entirely in their Ground and Foundation, so do they likewise in their Effects. By their Fruits ye shall know them, Matt. vii. 20. Religion, which is founded in Truth, always makes men impartially inquisitive after Truth, Lovers of Reason, Meek, Gentle, Patient, Willing to be informed: Superstition, on the contrary, naturally makes men blind and passionate, despisers of Reason, careless in inquiring after Truth, Hasty, Contumacious, Contentious, and Impatient of instruction. Religion teaches men to be exactly just, equitable, and charitable towards all men: Superstition, on the contrary, frequently puts men upon undervaluing the eternal Rules of Morality, and upon preferring the Interest of particular Sects and Parties, the prevalency of some

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uncertain Opinions, and the practise of some needless Ceremonies, before the unalterable Precepts of the everlasting Law and the everlasting Gospel. Lastly, True Religion, the Religion of Nature in general, and the Religion of Christ in particular, by securing the Belief of a future Judgment, tends greatly to promote the Happiness of Nations and good Governments, in obliging the Consciences of men to real Fidelity, Justice, and the sincere Practise of every Virtue, which the very best human Laws can but imperfectly secure, by compelling merely the External Action: But Superstition, on the contrary, frequently produces Wars, and Tumults, and Persecutions, and Tyrannies without end; there being nothing so wicked, which men of Superstitious Principles will not think pious and necessary, and which men of No Principles will not upon occasion bring themselves to submit to.

I SHALL conclude This Head, with observing that there are *Two* Particulars, wherein *True Religion*, the Religion taught by *Christ himself*; (for the Religion professed by many Nations who call themselves *Christian*, is palpably nothing but *Superstition*;) the *true Religion*, I say, as taught by *Christ himself*, has in *Two* Particulars principally, by men who receive not the Gospel, been objected to as encouraging *Superstition*. One is, that it teaches men to be *obstinate* and *wilful*, in parting with all Advantages, even with *Life* itself, for the sake of Religion. The Other is, that by teaching men to *despise* the *World*, it hinders them from attending to the *Good of the Publick*. But the Answer to Both these Objections, is not difficult. Without a *Stedfastness* which cannot be moved by Temporal Inconveniencies, there is *no Virtue* to be depended upon, in *natural Religion*, any more than

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in *Christian*: Is therefore *All Virtue*, nothing but *Superstition*? And as to *despising the World*, in the Sense of *with-drawing from the Business* of the World, Christianity no where teaches this, but only in Times and Places of general *Persecution*. In *Other Cases*, *despising the World*, does not signify *despising the Business* of the World, or neglecting to attend the *Publick Good*, but *despising all Temptations to the Wickedness* of the World, the Temptations of *lawless Pleasure*, the Temptations of *unjust Gains*, the Temptations of *corrupt Ambition*. These only, are, in the Scripture-sense, That *World* which is an Enemy to God.

S E R M O N

SERMON VII.

Of the WISDOM of being Religious.

PROV. ix. 10, 11.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding; For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy Life shall be increased.

THERE is no Desire which God has so deeply fixed and implanted in our Nature, as that of Preserving and Prolonging our Life. Life and Health, are the Foundation of all other enjoyments; and are therefore of greater value, than all other Possessions put together, because they are necessary in order to the Enjoyment of those Possessions; And without These, all other things that are the Objects of Men's Hopes and Desires in the World, have with regard to Us, no Being, no Subsistence. For, what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his Life? The principal Point of Wisdom

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therefore in the Conduct of Human Life, is so to use the enjoyments of this present World, as that they may not themselves shorten that Period, wherein 'tis allowed us to enjoy them. And if any part of Knowledge deserves a steddier attention, than other, and has of all others the justest pretense to be esteemed invaluable; 'tis unquestionably *That Knowledge*, by which, as the Wiseman here expresses it, our *days may be multiplied, and the Years of our Life may be increased.*

Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die; was the reasoning of the Epicure, mentioned by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xvi. 32. But it was very false reasoning, to make the melancholy consideration of the Shortness of Life an Argument for Debauchery, when that very Debauchery is evidently the Cause of making Man's Life still shorter. Temperance and Sobriety, the regular Government of our Appetites and Passions, the promoting Peace and good Order in the World, are, even *without* regard to any Arguments of Religion, the greatest instances of Human Wisdom; because they are the most effectual means of preserving our Being, and Well-being in the World; of prolonging the Period, and enlarging the Comforts and Enjoyments of Life. Religion, has added Strength to these Considerations; and, by annexing the Promise of God's immediate Blessing, to the natural Tendency and Consequences of Things, has made the Wisdom of choosing Virtue, infinitely more conspicuous; and the Folly of Vice, more apparently absurd. *Length of Days* upon *Earth*, is in the *old Testament* frequently promised to the *Righteous*; And the principal intent of that Promise, was to be an Emblem or Signification of a *longer Life*, even of *Eternity*, more expressly promised in
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the New. The Land of Canaan was a Type of Heaven, the true Land of Promise; And the days of the righteous being long in the Land which the Lord their God had given them, was a figurative præsignification of that future and more complete State of Happiness, wherein their days should be multiplied without number, and the years of their life should be increased without End. This is a Demonstration indeed, of the Wisdom of being Religious; and of the happy Effects of having always before our Eyes the Fear of the Lord. *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding; For by me thy Days shall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life shall be increased.*

The Fear of the Lord, and the Knowledge of the Holy, are two synonymous Expressions, each of which signifies in Scripture Phrase, the Practice of Virtue and true Religion. For so it is very usual in all good Authors, to express the Whole by some principal Part. Thus, when 'tis said, *The Soul that sinneth, it shall die*; because the Soul is the principal and most excellent part of Man, 'tis of the same import, as if it had been expressed, *The Man that sinneth, shall die*; and Gen. xlvii. 2. *All the Souls of the House of Jacob which came into Egypt*; that is, all the Persons, were threescore and ten. In like manner, because the Fear or Love of God, the Knowledge or Study of his Will, Faith or Trust in him, the Remembrance of him, or frequent Meditating upon his Laws, are principal Parts of Religion; and such as are apt to have so great an influence upon Men, that One of these Virtues can hardly be supposed to be found any where separate from the rest, or without producing its true and genuine Effects in the general course of a religious and

Holy Life ; therefore *each* of these are frequently put *singly* in Scripture for the *Whole* of Religion, and to express the Practice of Virtue in general. Thus, to Remember our *Creator in the days of our Youth*, is the Wiseman's description of an early Piety ; and with *the Wicked that shall be turned into Hell*, in the Psalmist's language, are joined *all the Nations that forget God*. In like manner *Believers*, or they that have *Faith* in God, signifies always in the *New Testament* good *Christians*, or such as are endued with *all* virtues and graces of the Spirit ; and on the contrary *every* kind of *Wickedness*, as well as *infidelity*, is represented under the Character of *Unbelief*. The Love of God, is by St. *John* and by our Saviour himself, defined to be *this, that we keep his Commandments*, 1 Joh. v. 3 ; and Joh. xiv. 15. The Knowledge of God, is in the writings of the same Apostle explained by the very same Phrase of *keeping his Commandments*, 1 Joh. ii. 3, 4 : and they that know not God, are by St. *Paul* described as Persons nothing differing from those *that obey not the Gospel*, 2 Th. i. 8. Lastly, Because *Fear* is of all other Passions the most deeply rooted in our Nature : and is more apt to be strongly moved by Apprehensions of the Divine displeasure, than the milder Passions of Desire and Hope are to be worked upon by Representations of the Excellency of Virtue and of the Greatness of its Reward ; therefore the Fear of God is the *most* frequently of all these figurative Expressions, put in Scripture for the Whole of Religion ; and Persons of Universal Piety and remarkable Holiness, are by no character more usually described than by This, that they *fear the Lord*, or *have the Fear of God before their Eye*. And because *each one* of these Phrases singly, signifies thus, properly enough,

enough, the *Summ of Religion*, therefore any Two of them may likewise be used, as synonymous to each other; As, in the Text, the *Fear* and the *Knowledge* of the Lord: *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding; For by me thy Days shall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life shall be increased.*

In the Words we may observe,

1st, THAT the Practice of Religion, is in general Man's truest Wisdom: *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding.*

2^{dly}, THAT the Practice of Religion is in particular Wise in *this respect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our days: *For by Me thy Deeds shall be multiplied, and the Years of thy Life shall be increased.* And

3^{dly}, IT may be reasonable to inquire, how far this Blessing of long Life promised to Obedience under the *Old Testament*, is proper to be desired by Christians under the Gospel-State.

1st. THE Words contain this universal Proposition; That *the Practice of Religion*, is in general Man's truest Wisdom: *The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding.* And here, the whole Tenor of Scripture, in Conjunction with the Reason of Things, concurs in setting forth the Wisdom of being virtuous and religious. The Books of Solomon especially, whose Human Judgment was superior to all others, even separate from his Knowledge in things Divine, are so full of this Notion; that, throughout all his Writings, the Words seem never to be used in any other Signification, but that Wisdom is always put for true Virtue and

Piety, and Folly or Madness for the Habit of Sin. As if there were *no other* Folly in the World, but that of Wickedness; nor *any* true Wisdom, but that of Religion; because, in the *comparative* Sense, no other things so *eminently* deserve those Names. And indeed, if Wisdom consists in studying those things, which are of the greatest Use and Necessity for us to Know; If it be wise to imploy our Thoughts about things *in their own Nature* the most Excellent, and, *in their relation to Us*, of the utmost importance; If it be Wise to pursue the noblest *Ends*, and in the pursuit thereof to use the best and properest *Means*; If it be Wise to consult our own real Happiness; and to be more concerned for the improvement of our Minds in practical Knowledge, than for amusing them with vain and empty Speculations; If Eternity be of more importance than Time, and a never-ceasing Duration than a transitory Moment; If the Favour of God be infinitely more valuable, than the Friendship of the World; and it be more advisable to please an Almighty Benefactor, than mortal Men whose Breath is in their Nostrils; If Joy and Satisfaction of Mind be truly more desirable, than endless Anxiety, Horrour and Despair; If Peace and Love, Charity and universal Good-Will, be more eligible than Wars, Confusions and Desolations; and it be wiser to promote the Happiness of the World, than that Men should make each other miserable without Cause and without End; In a word; If Wisdom consists in knowing and distinguishing, in choosing and in adhering to, *whatsoever things are true*, ————— *best*,
 ————— *just*, ————— *pure*, ————— *lovely*,
 ————— *of good report*; things that promote the Health of our Bodies, and secure the Peace and Quiet
 of

of our Minds; things that establish the Order of the World, and make Other Men Happy as well as ourselves; things that make our present enjoyments, easy, and the remembrance of what is past, comfortable; and the Hopes and Expectations of what is to come, secure; If the choosing *These* things, be the Part of a Wise Man; then is Religion evidently Man's truest Wisdom. For, where are these things to be found, but in the Practice of Virtue and true Religion?

THERE is a Wisdom in the understanding of *Arts* and useful *Sciences*; which are beneficial to Mankind in this present State; and are in Scripture ascribed to the inspiration of the Almighty: But *this* is a Wisdom confined to particular Persons, and its usefulness limited to a very short Duration. There is a Wisdom, which men place in being able to overreach and defraud each other, consisting in the *Skill and cunning Craftiness of them that lye in wait to deceive*: But this is a Wisdom falsely so called; and the End of it appears always to be the extreme Folly. There is a Wisdom, of those who by *Political Skill* manage secretly the great Affairs of the World, and by deep Counsels bring about unexpected Changes in the States and Kingdoms of the Earth; But *This* Wisdom is often a great Snare, and a dangerous Temptation to Men's Virtue; giving extraordinary Opportunities indeed to the brighter Virtue of some very few Heroick Spirits, to shine forth illustriously to the Glory of Religion in singular Acts of Moderation and Justice, of Piety and great Goodness, for the Publick Peace and Security of Mankind; but much more usually joined with great Wickedness, and seldom mentioned in Scripture, but with the Marks of an evil or suspicious Character. There is a Wisdom,

dom, in *Words*, and artful *Representations* of Things ; called by St. Paul the *enticing Words* of Man's Wisdom : But *This* also in Scripture, is always spoken of with an ill Character ; being that *Philosophy* and *vain Deceit*, That Art of confounding Truth and Falshood, which St. Paul warns us against ; and which vain Pretence to Wisdom, God chose the weak things of the World, the plain unaffected simplicity of the Doctrine of the Gospel, on purpose to confound. Lastly, There is a Wisdom in searching out the Secrets of Nature, and understanding the Variety of the Works of God : And this indeed, so far as 'tis practical, and leads to the Knowledge of the Author of Nature, is an excellent Wisdom, and worthy of great Commendation ; But where 'tis *merely Speculative*, 'tis of more Difficulty than Use, and lies level to the Capacity of but few men's Understandings. The *only Wisdom*, that all Men are capable of, and that all Men are indispensably obliged to attain, is the *Practical Wisdom* of being truly Religious ; the Wisdom of understanding and of steddily pursuing, their own true Temporal and Eternal Interest. The comparison between *Speculative* and this *Practical Wisdom*, is most elegantly made by Job, in his xxviiiith chapter : Surely, says he, *there is a Vein for the Silver, and a place for Gold where they fine it*, ver. 1. *There is a Path which no Fowl knoweth, and which the Vultur's Eye has not seen ; The Lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce Lion passed by it* ; ver. 7. *But where shall Wisdom be found, and where is the Place of Understanding ?* ver. 12. *Man knoweth not the price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the living ; The depth saith, It is not in Me ; and the Sea saith, It is not with Me ; It cannot be gotten for Gold, neither shall Silver be weighed*

weighed for the price thereof, ver. 15. Whence then cometh Wisdom? and where is the place of Understanding? ver. 20. The Reply follows; God, saith he, understandeth the Way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof; For He looketh to the Ends of the Earth, and seeth under the whole Heaven, ver. 23. But unto Man he said; Behold, the Fear of the Lord, That is his Wisdom, and to depart from Evil that is his Understanding, ver. 28. His Meaning is; The Secrets of Nature, God only knoweth perfectly; but the Knowledge of Religion, is the proper Wisdom of Man. The Secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed, belong unto Us and to our Children for ever; that we may do all the Works of the Law, Deut. xxix. ult. This is very affectionately expressed likewise by Moses in his exhortation to the Israelites, Deut. iv. 6; Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me; ————— Keep therefore and do them; for This is your Wisdom and Understanding in the sight of the Nations. This is that which alone can make men truly great, truly admirable and praiseworthy; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; a good Understanding have all they that do thereafter, the Praise of it, endureth for ever, Ps. cxi. 10. I conclude this Head, that the Practice of Religion is in general Man's truest Wisdom, with the excellent Words of the wise Author of the Book of Eccclus. ch. i, 14, 16, 26, 27. To fear the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom; and it was created with the faithful in the Womb: To fear the Lord, is fulness of Wisdom; and filleth men with her fruits: If thou desire Wisdom, keep the commandments; and the Lord shall give her

unto

unto thee; For the Fear of the Lord, is Wisdom and Instruction; and Faith and Meekness are his Delight.

2dly, THE Practice of Religion, as it is man's truest Wisdom in general, so in particular the Text assures us 'tis wise in *this Respect*, that it tends to prolong our Life and lengthen our Days: *The Fear of the Lord, is the beginning of Wisdom; and the Knowledge of the Holy, is Understanding; For by Me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy Life shall be increased.* There is nothing in the Old Testament more frequent, than Promises of Health and Life, of a longer and more comfortable Subsistence, to them that live in Obedience to the Commands of God. In the delivery of the Law, God himself annexes to the Fifth Commandment, a Promise that *the Days of those that observed it, should be long in the Land which the Lord their God had given them:* And St. Paul takes notice of it as the *first*, and indeed the only Commandment, with an express and particular Promise annexed. Solomon, in his Book of Proverbs, among a great variety of Arguments to perswade men to the Practice of Virtue, always mentions *Length of Days*, as a principal Motive proposed by God in the person of Wisdom; *My Son, forget not my Law, but let thine Heart keep my Commandments; For length of Days, and long Life, and Peace shall they add unto thee, Prov. iii. 1. They shall be Life unto thy Soul, ver. 22; and ver. 13. Happy is the Man that findeth Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Understanding; For Length of Days are in her right hand, and in her left hand Riches and Honour, ver. 16.* And accordingly the Psalmist in his exhortation to Obedience, cited by St. Peter in his first Epistle; *Come ye children, says he, hearken unto me, I will*

will teach you the Fear of the Lord ; What man is he that desireth Life, and loveth many Days, that he may see good ? Keep thy Tongue from evil, and thy Lips that they speak no guile ; Depart from evil, and do good, Ps. xxxiv. 11. And in the propheticall description of the final happy restoration of Jerusalem, among other blessings it is added, Is. lxxv. 20. There shall not be in it an old man that hath not filled his days. On the contrary, among the various Threatnings denounced in the Old Testament against Sinners, 'tis very usual to make this declaration, that their Days shall be shortned. Prov. x. 27. The Fear of the Lord prolongeth Days ; but the Years of the wicked shall be shortned. And Job xv. 31. Let not him that is deceived, trust in Vanity ; for Vanity shall be his recompense. It shall be accomplished before his Time, and his Branch shall not be green. He shall shake off his unripe grape as the Vine, and shall cast off his Flower as the Olive. The Application of which Observation, is made by the Wiseman, Eccles. vii. 17. Be not over-much Wicked, neither be thou foolish ; why shouldest thou die before thy Time ? There is something in the Nature of Things, that tends to verify this Doctrine ; and there is More in the positive Appointment and Constitution of Providence. In the Nature of Things, men destroy themselves and shorten their Days, by many kinds of Wickedness : By Wars and Desolations they depopulate whole Countries ; by private Quarrels they bring each other to untimely Ends ; by capital Crimes they bring themselves to be cut off by the Hands of Justice ; by Luxury and Intemperance they destroy their Bodies ; the riotous and unclean person going (as Solomon very elegantly expresses it) like as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a Fool to the correction
of

of the flocks ; 'Till a dart ftrike through his Liver ; as a Bird hafeth to the fnares, and knoweth not that it is for his Life, Prov. vii. 22. By Envy and Malice they confume themfelves, and pine away in the midft of their iniquity ; This alfo is elegantly expreffed by Solomon, Prov. xiv. 30. A foud Heart is the Life of the Flefh, but Envy the Rottennefs of the Bones. Laftly, by the Terrors of their own Minds are they eaten up, and gnawed upon by the Worm of Confcience till they are confumed : Pf. xxxix. 11. When thou with Rebukes doft chaften Man for Sin, thou makeft his Beauty to confume away, like as it were a Moth fretting a garment. In like manner on the other hand, according to the fame natural Tendency of Things, by Peace and Charity are men preferved from Defttruction ; by Temperance are their Bodies maintained in Health ; by Quiet of Confcience and Satisfaction of Mind, is a new Life added to their Spirits ; Prov. iii. 7. Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil ; It fhall be Health to thy Navel, and Marrow to thy Bones. Which Notion is ftill more fully expreffed by the Author of the Book of Ecclefiafticus, ch. i. ver. 11, 12, 20. The Fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladnefs, and a crown of rejoicing ; The Fear of the Lord maketh a merry Heart, and giveth joy and gladnefs, and a long Life ; The Root of Wisdom is to fear the Lord, and the Branches thereof are long Life.

AND This, in the Natural Order and Tendency of Things.

IN the *positive Appointment and Conftitution of Providence*, there was yet more Affurance of the Doctrine : God, under the Old Testament, wherein thefe Promifes were made, *ufually* preferving the Righteous by a fingular Care and Protection ; (fo that Job's Friends could

could appeal to experience, *Whoever perished being innocent? or when were the righteous cut off?* Job iv. 7.) and on the contrary, the same Providence generally cutting off the Wicked, by extraordinary judgments, in the present Life. Even of those who prospered longest, so that it was hard for the Psalmist to understand the reason of it, and reconcile it with Providence, *Pf. lxxiii. 16*; yet even of *These* at length he observed upon better consideration, *Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castedst them down into Destruction; How are they brought into Desolation as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with Terrors,* ver. 18, 19. But, most frequently, evil Doers were cut off sooner, and destroyed suddenly in the midst of their carriere. *Hast thou marked the old way, which Wicked men have trodden? which were cut down out of Time, whose foundation was overflowed with a Flood?* Job xxii. 15. *Bloody and deceitful Men, shall not live out half their days,* *Pf. lv. 23.* Upon account of the Profaneness of *Eli's* Family, God threatens him, *1 Sam. ii. 32. There shall not be an old man in thy house for ever.* And the Psalmist, as being sensible what the usual Effect of Wickedness was, prays thus, *Pf. cii. 24. O my God, take me not away in the midst of my Days.* Indeed, in the whole Book of *Psalms* the Wicked are perpetually threatned with being cut off before their Time: And That Threatning is paraphrased with great Variety and Elegancy of Expression, in the Book of *Job*; *The Flag, whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other Herb; So are the Paths of all that forget God, and the Hypocrites Hope shall perish.* ch. viii. ver. 12. *Yea the Light of the wicked shall be put out; and the spark of his Fire shall not shine,* ch. xvi. i.

ver. 5. *His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off,* ver. 16. *They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low, — and cut off as the tops of the ears of Corn,* ch. xxiv. ver. 24.

NEVERTHELESS, after all This ; forasmuch as general Threatnings are not executed always without exception ; neither were the Wicked constantly cut off, even under the Times of the *Old Testament* ; but sometimes prospered for a long time ; and Sudden Cutting off was not itself always a judgment, but sometimes a *taking away from the Evils to come* ; and righteous Persons themselves, were not always preserved from every Destruction ; but in some cases, God threatned to *cut off the Righteous with the Wicked* ; and Preservation itself, or Length of Days, was not always a Mercy ; but only when it was promised and granted as an Emblem or Præsignification of a longer, even of an eternal Life ; and the Temporal promises of the *Old Testament*, cannot Now be applied with any Certainty under the New ; where eternal Life is so much more clearly revealed : For these reasons, in the

3^d place, It may be worthy our Inquiry, *how far* this Blessing of long Life promised to Obedience under the *Old Testament*, is proper to be desired by Christians under the Gospel State. And here it is certain the Gospel gives us so mean a Notion of the present Life, and so glorious a representation of the Happiness of that to come ; that no Man who firmly believes the Scriptures, and has lived so religiously as to have secured to himself a good Foundation against the Time to come, but must needs wish rather, (whenever he seriously meditates upon these things,) to be *delivered from*

from the miseries of this sinful World, and to be present with the Lord, which is far better. But alas! there are few, extremely few, whose Lives have either been so innocent, or their Repentance and Amendment so complete, as not to have Reason to wish for more years, wherein to root out more perfectly their former ill Habits, or to improve the good Dispositions they have already in some measure attained. And it were very well, if even Years and Experience could, in these latter degenerate Ages of the World, produce but the same Effect which the Belief of the Gospel, in the primitive and purest Times, accomplished frequently as it were in a Moment. But if the generality of Christians were so perfect, as not to need to desire longer Space of Time for their own Amendment and Improvement; yet at least for the sake of others, with whom they are concerned either in private Friendships, or in natural Relation, or in publick Affairs, 'tis reasonable men should desire for themselves, and others for them, the Blessing of Length of Days. For none of us liveth to Himself, and no man dieth to Himself, Rom. xiv. 7; and St. Paul, though for his own part he desired rather to be present with the Lord; yet, because for him to live was Christ, that is, was needful for the propagation of the Gospel, and more beneficial to the Persons he had Converted; therefore he desired rather to continue with them; and This he calls the Fruit of his Labour, Phil. i. 22. Further; since God placed Us in this World, for Ends and Purposes of his all-wise Providence; and we know not beforehand what Duties he intends to call us to; and he has implanted in us a natural and necessary Desire of Life, in order to accomplish his Wise Designs in the Government of the World; 'tis therefore natural and

reasonable for us to look upon Length of Days as a Blessing; and that *the hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness*. But when any person through discontent desires, not to continue in the World, nor to fulfil that Duty which God has appointed him here; 'tis like desiring that he had never come into it; which is murmuring and finding fault with God's Creation, and repining at God for making us such Creatures as he has been pleased to make us. However, the very longest Life here, is but a Moment in Comparison of Eternity; And the greatest Length of Days, is then only really a Blessing, (as I before observed,) when 'tis a Type or Emblem of a happy Eternity, of God's *giving men indeed a long Life, even for ever and ever*, Ps. xxi. 4. We ought therefore to make it the main Care of our Lives, to secure our Eternal Happiness hereafter; and then Length of Days here, will be a Blessing not only upon their own Account, but much more so upon account of their affording us Opportunity, of preparing ourselves by still greater Care and Watchfulness, and continual improvement of ourselves in the Practice of all Virtues, for a more perfect and complete Degree of Happiness in the Life to come. If This be not done, Length of Days, will, like all other Blessings, be turned into a Curse; and become only a stronger Evidence against us, of our incorrigible Impenitency. If we be not *so taught to number our Days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wisdom*; If, as our Years pass on, we think not more and more intensely on the Preparations for Eternity; but defer our Repentance from *day to day*, and put off our designs of being religious from *one year to another*; it will nothing profit us, (nay, on the contrary, it will be a great Aggravation of our Misery,)

Misery,) that our *Days have been multiplied, and that the Years of our Life have been increased.* For, when all these things are passed away as a Shadow, and as a Post that passeth by; (which is the case even of the longest Life here upon Earth;) then sudden and so much heavier destruction will come upon us unawares, even as Pain upon a Woman in Travail, and we shall not escape. Then the expectations of the delaying Sinner shall appear *thin as the Spider's web*; and his Hopes as the light Chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the Face of the Earth. Then they who spend the Day in Riot and Debauchery, and say *To morrow shall be as this Day and much more abundant,* shall have their Soul required of them in a moment; and the Servant that says in his Heart, *My Lord delayeth his Coming;* and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the Unbelievers; and how much soever the Masters delay, i. e. how long soever that wicked Servant's Life be, yet his destruction, when it comes, surprizes him unprovided as in a moment. But He, on the other hand, who in a short Life makes speedy provision for Eternity; though he be prevented with early death, yet, being made perfect in a short Time, he fulfilleth a long time; as the Son of Sirach excellently expresses it; *For honourable Age is not that which standeth in length of Time, nor that is measured by numbers of Years; But Wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old Age.*

SERMON VIII.

*Of imitating the HOLINESS of
GOD.*

I PET. i. 15, 16.

*But as he which hath called you, is Holy ; so
be ye Holy, in all manner of Conversation ;
Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am
holy.*

NOTWITHSTANDING the natural Proneness
of Mankind to Superstition ; and the strong
Bent, which is in all corrupt Minds, to en-
deavour to make amends, by formal and external Ser-
vices, for the want of true Virtue and Holiness of
Life ; yet even in the *Heathen* World itself, under the
bare Light of *Nature* alone, the best and wisest men
were sensible of this great Truth, that the most ac-
ceptable Service which could be paid to God, was to
indeavour to become *like* him by a righteous Temper
and Disposition of Mind. The *Revelation* which God
has been pleased to make to us of himself in Scripture,
does every where confirm this Notion ; and almost the
whole Design, both of the antient Prophets under the
Law, and of all our Saviour's Discourses in the Gospel,
is

is to establish the same Doctrine: *As he which hath called you, is Holy; so be Ye Holy, in all manner of Conversation.* In the following Discourse upon which words, I shall 1st briefly set forth the *Obligations* we are under to *imitate* the God whom we worship. 2^{dly}, I shall consider the true *Extent*, and proper *Limitations* of This Duty. And 3^{dly}, I shall draw some useful *Observations* from the whole.

1st. I SHALL briefly set forth the *Obligations* we are under, to *imitate* the God whom we worship. The *Difference* of moral Good and Evil, is, in the nature of things, eternally, essentially, and unchangeably necessary. Just as *Light* and *Darkness* are of necessity always contrary to each other, and can by no Power be made to be the same. With regard to this necessary and unalterable difference of Good and Evil; the *Will of God*, who can never be imposed upon by any Error, is constantly and invariably determined to do always what in the whole is *best and fittest* to be done, according to the everlasting Rules of Justice, Equity, Goodness and Truth. This, is the Ground and Foundation of all God's *own Actions* in the Government of the Universe. Now the same intrinsic Excellency of *Right* and *Good*, which always determines the Will of God Himself, ought also in Proportion to govern the Actions of all other rational Beings likewise; according to the degree of their *Knowledge* of what is right, and of their *Power* to perform it. That is to say; All *rational and intelligent* Beings are, by the Law of their Nature, obliged to endeavour to become in their several degrees and proportions *like unto Him*, who alone is *Perfect Reason* and Understanding. This is an *original Obligation*, founded in *Nature itself*, requiring us to *imitate* what

it necessitates us to admire. And this Obligation is confirmed, by the same Light of Reason teaching us further, that *Imitation of God*, as 'tis most fit in itself, so it cannot but be likewise most acceptable unto Him, and agreeable to his *Will*. For, the same absolute Perfection of the Divine Nature, which makes us certain that God must *Himself* be of Necessity infinitely Holy, Just and Good; makes it equally certain, that he cannot possibly approve Iniquity in Others; And the same Beauty, the same Excellency, the same Weight and Importance of the Rules of everlasting Righteousness, with regard to which God is always pleased to make those Rules the Measure of all his Own Actions, necessarily prove, that it must likewise be his *Will*, that all rational Creatures should proportionably make them the Measure of *Theirs*. Even among Men, there is no *Earthly* Father, but in those things which he esteems his own Excellencies, desires and expects to be imitated by his children. How much more is it necessary that God, who has the tenderest Concern for all his Creatures, and who is infinitely far from being subject to such Passions and Variableness as frail Men are, should desire to be imitated by his Creatures in those Perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable Happiness!

PARTICULARLY, If God is *himself* essentially of infinite Holiness and Purity; it plainly follows, that 'tis impossible but he must likewise be of purer Eyes than to behold with Approbation any manner of Impurity or Immorality in his Creatures. (Hab. i. 13.) And consequently it must needs be his *Will*, that they should All (according to the Measure of their frail and finite nature) be *Holy as He is Holy*.

IF God is *himself* a Being of infinite Justice, Righteousness and Truth ; it must needs be his *Will*, that all *rational Creatures*, whom he has created after his own Image, whom he has indued with excellent Powers and Faculties to enable them to distinguish between Good and Evil ; should imitate him in the Exercise of those divine Perfections, by conforming all their Actions to the eternal and unalterable Law of Righteousness.

IF God is *himself* a Being of infinite Goodness ; *making his Sun to rise on the Evil, and on the Good, and sending Rain on the Just and on the Unjust ; having never left himself wholly without Witness, but always doing Good, giving men Rain from Heaven and Fruitful Seasons, and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness*: it cannot but be his *Will*, that all *reasonable creatures* should, by mutual Love and Benevolence, permit and assist each other to enjoy in particular the several Effects and Blessings of the divine universal Goodness.

IF God is *himself* a Being of infinite Mercy and Compassion ; as 'tis plain he bears long with men before he punishes them for their Wickedness, and often freely forgives them his *ten thousand Talents* ; it must needs be his *Will*, that they should forgive one another their *hundred pence* ; being *merciful* one to another, *as he is merciful to them All* ; and *having Compassion* each on his *Fellow-servants*, as *God has pity on Them*.

Again : IF Love towards God, be an obvious and principal Duty of Natural Religion, in those who believe God to be the Supreme Good ; it follows of necessity, that *Imitation* of him also, must equally be a Duty of indispensable Obligation. For God, being essential Goodness, Righteousness and Truth, can no other-

otherwise have *Love* exprest towards him from his Creatures, than by their loving and imitating those Virtues in *their* Practise, which in *His* Nature are essential Perfections. Love of God, in any *other* sense than This, is nothing else ; but unintelligible Enthusiasm. Lastly : If *Happiness* is Man's chief End ; and *perfect Happiness* is, in the divine nature, in *essential* conjunction with perfect *Holiness* and *Goodness* ; it follows necessarily, that *so far only* can any creature possibly become *like* to God in the injoyment of *Happiness*, as he is first made *like* to him in the participation of *Goodness*.

THESE are the *Obligations* we are under, to imitate the God whom we worship ; drawn from the consideration of the Nature of *things*, and of the *Will* of God as made known to us by the *Light* of Reason only. In the *Revelation* which God has been pleased to make to us of himself in *Scripture*, the necessity of the same Duty, is more expressly and more clearly inforced. At the delivery of the *Law* to *Moses*, the *particulars* of Duty, by which the Worshippers of the True God were to be distinguished from all other Nations, are introduced with this general Preface to the *whole*, Levit. xix. 1. *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying. Speak unto all the Congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be Holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy. And ch. xi. 44. I am the Lord your God ; ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves ; and ye shall be Holy, for I am Holy.* By the citation of which words, spoken thus from the Mouth of God himself to *Moses* ; the *Apostle* confirms his own Argument in the words of the Text ; *As He which hath called you, is Holy ; so be Ye Holy, in all manner of Conversation ; Because it is written, Be ye Holy, for I am*

I am Holy. Man, was originally created in the *Image* of God, *Gen. i. 27*; that is, he was made in his *natural* capacity a rational and intelligent creature, capable of distinguishing between Good and Evil, and of being Lord over the inferiour Creation. By a right use of these Powers and Faculties, in imitation of God; he is declared likewise in the *moral* sense, to be *after God, created in righteousness and true Holiness*, *Eph. iv. 24.* *After God*, that is, after the *pattern and similitude* of God, *after the Image of Him that created him*, *Col. iii. 10.* By Debauchery and Corruption of manners, by the Practice of Any wickedness whatsoever, men are *alienated*, saith *St. Paul*, *from the Life of God*, *Eph. iv. 18*: And when again by true Repentance and real Amendment of Life, they return to their Duty, and improve in the Practice of Virtue; the Apostle represents them as being restored and *made partakers of the Divine Nature*, *2 Pet. i. 4.* The manner of speaking is figurative, and very elegantly expressive of that *moral* likeness to God, which is elsewhere styled literally, being *partakers of his Holiness*, *Heb. xii. 10*; and, in the Text, being *Holy as He is Holy*. Without which *Holiness*, the Scripture plainly declares, *no man shall see the Lord*. (*Heb. xii. 14.*) A *Likeness* to God *here*, by the habitual Disposition of a virtuous mind; is indispensably necessary to the enjoyment of *Glory and Happiness hereafter*. And the Perfection even of *That* *Glory and Happiness* itself, principally consists, in our becoming *still more and more* like him, by the total abolishing of all Sin: *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, *1 Joh. iii. 2.* What the full meaning of This is, the Apostle tells us, *does not yet clearly appear*. But, though God is *himself* invisible; yet both
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by the *Light of Nature*, we have a *competent Knowledge* of his *moral Attributes*; and in the *Life of Christ*, who is the *visible Image* of the *invisible God*, we have a *complete Example*, and *Pattern of moral Perfection*, set before us to imitate. *Learn of Me*, saith our Saviour, *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And again in another place, *I have given you an Example*, saith he, *that ye should do as I have done to you*. (Joh. xiii. 15.) The Apostles accordingly, in their exhortations to the practise of Virtue, do frequently remind us of this Divine Pattern: 1 Pet. ii. 21. Christ has *left us an Example*, *that ye should follow his Steps*; *who did no Sin*, *neither was guile found in his mouth*: And 1 Job. ii. 6. *He that saith, he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*. This is the highest Excellency and Perfection of a Christian; to be *conformed to the Image of the Son of God*, by a *Life of Virtue and Righteousness here*: (Rom. viii. 29.) Which whosoever is, shall *hereafter also be changed into the same Image, from glory to glory*; (2 Cor. iii. 18.) when our Lord shall *present his Servants faultless before the presence of his Father's glory, with exceeding Joy*; and they shall *see his Face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads*; and they shall *serve him day and night in his Temple*, and enjoy his *uninterrupted Favour for ever and ever*.

THESE are the *Obligations* we are under, to imitate God: Which was the *first Head* I proposed to speak to.

II^{dly}, I AM in the next place to consider the *true Extent*, and *proper Limitations* of this Duty. And here 'tis very evident,

1st, THAT All imitation of God, must be understood

stood to be an imitation of his *moral* Attributes only, and not of his *natural* ones. In the exercise of his Supreme Power, we cannot imitate him: In the Extent of his unerring Knowledge we cannot attain to any Similitude with him: We cannot at all *Thunder with a Voice like Him*, Job xl. 9; nor are we able to search out and comprehend, the least part of the depth of his unfathomable Wisdom. But his Holiness and Goodness, his Justice, Righteousness, and Truth; his Mercy and Compassion; these things we can understand; in these things we can imitate him; nay, we cannot approve ourselves to him as obedient Children, if we do not imitate him therein.

THE Holiness of God; that is, in general, That disposition of the Divine Nature, by which he is infinitely removed from all *moral Evil whatsoever*, is in an emphatical manner proposed to our imitation in the words of the Text; *As he which has called you, is Holy, so be Ye Holy in all manner of Conversation.* The word, *Holiness*, is perpetually in the mouths of Christians; but what it properly means, This they have often but a very imperfect and confused Notion of. It signifies originally, in the Jewish language, *Separation from Common Use*: And in That Sense, all the Vessels and Furniture of the Temple, are, in the Old Testament, stiled, *Holy*. In the same Sense, 'tis used of *Persons* also, employed in the Service of God; who are intitled to this *external* and *nominal Holiness*, whether they really answer their character or no. But the word is used in a *better* Sense, when 'tis transferred from this *literal* to a *moral* signification; expressing a man's being *separated*, by true religion, from the *common Practices* of a vicious and corrupt World; And, when applied to God, it signifies his

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infinite Distance, from every kind and degree of moral Evil whatsoever.

IN the Text therefore, is proposed to our imitation the Example of the Divine *Holiness*, or his *Hatred to Sin and Wickedness* in general; *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy*. In other passages of Scripture, particular moral Attributes are laid before us as Patterns to walk by. The words immediately following the Text, set forth the Justice of God; ver. 17. *Calling on the Father, who, without respect of Persons, judgeth according to every man's work*. In the fifth chapter of St. Matthew, our Saviour directs us to imitate the Goodness of God, as the most effectual means to obtain a share in his Favour, and a part in his most perfect Happiness: *Love your Enemies*, saith he, (that is, *not*, make them equal with your Friends, *but*, desire and promote their amendment, and then be ready to forgive them;) *do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you: That ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven*, (that is, that ye may be like unto Him,) *who maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust*. And, to mention no more Instances, the *Mercy* of God is by our Saviour in a very affectionate manner proposed as an Example to excite us to Charity; Luk. vi. 35. *Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your Reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind unto the Unthankful and to the Evil; Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful*. Which last words, are remarkably varied by St. Matthew, in his narration of the same Discourse of our Lord. For what in St. Luke we read thus, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful; is*

by St. Matthew set down in the following manner, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* (Mat. v. 48.) As if *Perfection*, and *Mercy or Charity*, were one and the same thing; and as if he that was truly indued with this virtue of *Charity*, might consequently be supposed to be perfect in all other virtues likewise. This is the *first* necessary limitation, of this Duty of imitating God; It must always be understood, to be an imitation of his *moral* Perfections only.

2dly, EVEN in these *moral* Excellencies, 'tis evident further, that it must necessarily mean, an imitation of *likeness* only, and not of *Equality*. One would think, there could be no great need of this Observation. Yet some Enthusiasts there have been, who have vainly boasted themselves to be altogether without Sin; and being puffed up with spiritual pride, and thinking themselves *above* the Duties of what they call *common Morality*, have by a Neglect of true Virtue, fallen into the snare and condemnation of the Devil. Of This kind there seem to have been Some in St. John's time, against whom he directs his Discourse, in his First Epistle, ch. i. 8. *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.* But in our present Age, men are apt to run much rather into the contrary extreme; not pretending to a perfection above what is humane, but neglecting to endeavour after what is their Duty to obtain. They know God to be a Being of infinite Holiness; that he charges even his Angels with Folly, and the Heavens are not pure in his Sight: And therefore they think frail men may be excused from attempting to imitate him at all. But This, is a very wicked and profane Suggestion. For though the Goodness indeed of such

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imperfect creatures as *we* are, can be but in a very mean and low degree; yet *in* that proportion and degree, we are indispensably bound to follow after it. And as a Finite *can* resemble infinite, so *we are* to resemble God, by partaking of the same moral excellencies in *kind*, though they cannot but be infinitely inferior in *degree*. The Light of a *Star*, though it bears no proportion at all to the glorious Beauty of the *Sun*, yet *Light* it is nevertheless, and directly contrary to *Darkness*: So the Virtues of *Angels and of Men*, though they bear *no proportion* to the adorable Perfections of *God*, yet, in their proper *measure and degree*, they resemble them, as being of the same *nature and kind*; opposite and contrary to *wickedness*, just as every degree of *Light* is contrary to *Darkness*. The Apostle aptly expresses This, by the similitude of a *Child* learning to imitate the Virtues of a *wise man* and an *affectionate Parent*; Eph. v. i. *Be ye therefore Followers of God*, saith he, *as Dear Children*.

3dly, B U T though our Imitation of the moral Perfections of God, is always to be understood with these great Limitations; as signifying an imitation of *Likeness* only, and not of *Equality*; suitable to the weak nature of such frail, imperfect, and fallible Creatures: Yet ought we *also* to consider, that even in the *Degrees* of Goodness it is our Duty *continually* to improve, if we will at all answer the Precept in the Text, *Be ye Holy, for I am Holy*. A perfect and most complete Example is set before us to imitate, that aiming always at That which is most excellent, we may grow continually and make a perpetual Progress in the ways of Virtue; And though we can never come up to our Pattern itself, yet, by such imitation as our frail and mortal nature is capable of, we may attain to what

St. Peter calls being made *Partakers of the Divine Nature*. Which participation of true Holiness after the Image of him that created us, is truly and in a proper Sense the comparative Perfection of our *Humane* nature, as *absolute* Perfection is the Perfection of the *Divine*. Which clearly explains the meaning and extent of St. Paul's exhortation, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that we should perfect *Holiness in the Fear of God*; and That Advice of our Saviour himself, St. Matt. v. 48. *Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.*

III. IT remains now in the *last* place, that I draw some useful *Observations* from the Whole of what has been said; and so conclude. And

1st, IF true Religion consists in the imitation of God; and all imitation of God, is of necessity confined to his *moral* Perfections only; then it hence evidently follows, that *moral Virtue* is the chief End of Religion; and that, to place the main stress of religion in any thing else besides true Virtue, is Enthusiasm or Superstition. When our Saviour gave his Apostles Power over unclean Spirits, he thought it necessary to add at the same time the following Caution, Luke x. 20. *Notwithstanding in This rejoice not, that the Spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your Names are written in Heaven: your Names are written in Heaven*, that is, your Repentance and Obedience is acceptable to God: For so, in Scripture-phrase, they who keep the *Commandments of God*, are said to be *written in the Book of Life*; and those who *Sin* against him, he threatens that he will blot out of his *Book*, Exod. xxxii. 33. Again: In his description of the day of Judgment, *Many*, says our Saviour, *will say to me in That day, Lord, Lord,*
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have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, Depart from Me ye that work iniquity; that is, all ye who have lived vitiously and immorally. St. Paul in like manner, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. Though I speak, says he, with the Tongues of Men and Angels; and though I have the gift of Prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity,——it profiteth me nothing. The greatest part of the Rulers of this World, are strangely guilty of This Error; when they affect rather to be like God in Power, which is not an imitable Attribute, than in Goodness, wherein alone 'tis their Glory to be like him.

2dly. If True Religion consists in the imitation of God; and that which is imitable in God, be his moral Perfections; hence it follows necessarily, that moral Excellencies, Justice, Goodness, Truth, and the like, are of the same kind in God as in Men. For otherwise, if (as some have imagined in order to maintain unintelligible doctrines,) Justice, Goodness, and Truth in God, did not answer our common and natural Notions of those Virtues; but were of a kind quite different, and inconceivable to us; how then could Men be obliged to imitate they knew not what? or how could it become possible in any sense to be holy as he is Holy, if it could not be understood by us What Holiness is? The Truth therefore plainly is; As Light is Light, wheresoever and in what degree soever it appears; and has no communion or similitude with Darknes: so Goodness, in whomsoever and in what degree soever it be found, still always carries along with it the same
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Idea of Goodness; and has no communion or Fellowship with Wickedness.

3dly and *Lastly*; FROM hence it appears, of how great importance it is to *Men*, to frame to themselves right and worthy Notions of *God*. For such as are the Conceptions Men have, of the *Object of their Worship*; such also will proportionably, be *their own Behaviour and Practice*. The *Gentiles*, who worshipped *vile and impure Deities*, were *themselves* accordingly *given up to work all Uncleaness with Greediness*. The *Jews*, when they fell from the worship of the True God, to serve the Idols and Images of really or fictitiously *cruel Dæmons*; were *themselves* accordingly dejected of humanity, and sacrificed even their own Children to *Moloch*. And among *Christians* likewise, it is too sad and true an observation; that in proportion as they have departed from the Simplicity of the Gospel, and feigned to themselves either *ridiculous* or *wicked* notions of the infinitely wise and good God; so has there *religion* accordingly been changed either into a *ridiculous*, or into a *barbarous* and *cruel* Superstition. The only possible remedy for which Evil, is to adhere steadfastly and immoveably to the natural and unchangeable notions of *righteousness* (and *holiness* in *God*, and the indispensable necessity of true *righteousness* and *holiness* among *Men*.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N IX.

Of the LOVE of GOD towards Sinners.

St JOHN iii. 16.

For God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

THESE Words are *part* of that Excellent Discourse, wherein our Saviour instructed *Nicodemus*, giving him a short Account of the Doctrine of the Gospel ; And the Words themselves, are a brief Summary of that whole Discourse. *Nicodemus* was a Man of Learning and Authority among the *Jews*, and, as it seems, of a better and more pious Disposition, than the generality of those of his own Rank. Moved therefore by the Greatness of our Saviour's Miracles, and probably also having studied the Prophecies, which foretold the coming of the Messias about That Season ; he thought himself bound to inquire what That Doctrine was, which our Saviour began so publickly and with so great Authority to teach ; And accordingly he goes to him by Night,
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to converse privately about it. Our Saviour, addressing himself to him as to a Man of Understanding, begins at the Foundation of the Whole ; and represents to him the Necessity of entering upon a religious Course of Life, according to the perfecter and more spiritual Principles of the Christian institution : *ver. 3. Except, says he, a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.* Which Expression, Nicodemus at first not understanding ; our Saviour further, explains it to him, *ver. 5. Except, says he, a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit ; except he be baptized into the Profession of the true Religion, and, suitably to this external Obligation, be inwardly renewed and purified from all wicked Dispositions in the Spirit of his Mind ; he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* For, *whatsoever is born of the Flesh, can be but Flesh ; That which is born of the Spirit, That only is Spirit.* By natural Birth, a Man can have no other Title, than only to the enjoyments this *Natural and Mortal Life* : To *Immortality* and a share in the *Kingdom of God*, he cannot be intitled, but by a New and *Spiritual Birth*, by being delivered from the Dominion of *Fleshly Lusts*, and living under the more perfect Law of Reason and Religion. To make This still more intelligible, and to take off the Difficulty of apprehending the meaning of that Phrase of being *Born again*, our Saviour proceeds to illustrate it by an easy similitude, *ver. 7 ;* that, as in the Course of *Nature* some of the greatest and most sensible Effects are produced by secret and imperceptible Causes, so it ought not to be wondered at if some of the greatest *Moral Effects* and most important Changes in the Mind of Man be wrought likewise by degrees invisible, and by means not discernable to Sense : *Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be*
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born again: *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

HAVING thus prepared the Way, by explaining the Foundation; our Saviour from hence makes a Transfiguration, *ver. 12.* to the higher and more sublime Doctrines of the Gospel; *If I have told you, says he, earthly things, and ye believe not; how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things? If ye believe me not even in these plain and more obvious matters, which I have suited to your Capacities, and delivered in easy Comparisons, drawn from the most natural and common things here upon Earth; how much less will ye believe me, when I tell you more sublime and heavenly mysteries? when I declare to you the Dignity of my Person and Office, the spiritual Nature of my Kingdom, and the Sufferings I must first undergo for the Redemption of Mankind? And yet these things are true and certain as the others; and the Works which I do, are sufficient Arguments, why ye should believe me even in These things also. Now These sublimer Doctrines he begins to enumerate, ver. 13. No man, says he, hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven; That is; Christ, the Son of Man, the promised Messias, That Son of Man described in the Prophet Daniel as coming in the clouds of Heaven to receive an everlasting Dominion; This Son of Man came forth from God, so as no other Prophet, no not Moses himself, ever did; For he was with God, before he came amongst Men; and when he first appeared in this World, he had before had a Being in Heaven in the Bosom of his Father, in which Dignity he still*
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continues. And 'tis the Prerogative of *him* only, who came thus from God as no other ever did, throughly to understand and to reveal to Men, the yet secret Counsels of God concerning the establishment of his Kingdom, and the Method of Men's Salvation. *No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, even the Son of Man which is in Heaven.* What This Method of Men's Salvation was, he proceeds more distinctly to declare, *ver. 14 and 15, As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal Life.* That is: That the Messiah, by his Sufferings and Death should accomplish the Redemption and Salvation of Men, opening an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, to all those who shall sincerely obey him; *This* (says our Saviour) ye ought not to be surprized at, as a new and strange Doctrine; since ye have a representation and prediction of it, even in your own Law. For as *Moses* set up in the Wilderness the Figure of a Serpent, which being indeed the Likeness of a venomous Beast, yet was so far from having any thing of its poisonous Nature, that on the contrary all those which had been bitten by real Serpents, were immediately healed by looking up towards this Representation: So the *Son of Man*, (*Mal. iii. 1.*) the *Angel of the Covenant*, (*Is. lxiii. 9.*) being made in the likeness of sinful Flesh, yet having really no Sin in him, shall be lifted up on the Cross, that by the Power of his Death, sinful men believing in him, and being enabled to conquer and forsake their Sins, may obtain remission of Sin, and Everlasting Life. For thus he adds in the Words of the Text, summing up his whole Discourse; *God so loved the World, that he gave his*
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only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

THE Connexion of our Lord's Discourse being thus explained; we may in the Words themselves consider *1st*, how and in what sense it is supposed, that without the coming of Christ into the World, Men could not but have perished: *2^{dly}*, in what Sense it is affirmed, that all who believe in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life: and *3^{dly}*, we may take Notice, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ is ascribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Goodness and Mercy of the Father Almighty. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

1st, WE are to consider, how it is *supposed* in the words of the Text, that without the Coming of Christ into the World, Men could not but have perished. And for the clearer explaining the ground of this Supposition, it may be proper to observe in the *first* place, that when God originally created Man in the State of *Innocence*, and seated him in the Garden of Paradise, there was no *Obligation* upon God to induce him with Immortality. 'Twas not by Virtue of any Claim of *Right*, or by any *Necessity* in the Nature of the Thing, but an Effect of his unbounded *Goodness* only, and a mere *free Gift*, that God created Man to be *Immortal*, and made him to be an *Image of his own Eternity*. He might justly have created him for what Time he pleased; and even in the State of *Innocence*, might without any Wrong have put a Period to That Being, which at first 'twas nothing but his own good Pleasure, that moved him to give Beginning to it all. And if This was the Case even in the State of

Innocence itself, how much more when Man by Sin had forfeited all Title to the Divine Favour! If God was under no Obligation to give Immortality to the immediate Work of his own Hands, how much less to the Posterity of a fallen Sinner! and what claim could *They* have to the perpetual injoyment of Paradise, which to their First Parent himself, even in his most perfect State of Innocence, was but a Free Gift! Undoubtedly nothing is more evident, than that God might without any Wrong have left them All to the natural Consequences of their own Mortality, and without any Injury to them might have forbore to make that Promise of eternal Life in Christ, which the World would have had no Right to demand, even though there had never been in it any Sin. But then we are also to observe *further*, that All the Sons of *Adam* are moreover Sinners *themselves*; and as by the Sin of *Adam* they became in the *Course of Nature* excluded out of Paradise, and from the Tree of Life, and from the Hopes of Immortality; so by their *own* Sins they became farther, and in a more proper Sense, liable to the Wrath of God; and subject, not only to *Death*, which came *equally* and *universally* upon All; but also to *actual Punishments* in the future State, *proportionable* to every man's *private Sin* and *personal Demerit*. From which *common Death*, coming *equally* upon All; and from which *proportionable Punishment*, due to *every man's particular Sins*; nothing, that Sinners themselves could do, could avail to rescue them, or to prevent their *perishing* according to the *Course of Nature*, and the righteous Judgment of God. For God, whose Promise of Immortality even to *Innocent* Creatures, was but a Free Gift of mere Bounty, was much less under any Obligation to provide a Place
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of eternal Happiness for the Posterity of a sinful Parent, themselves, also actual Sinners, and at the best but very imperfect and undeserving Penitents; whose greatest Endeavours of Repentance, could at the most but afford ground of Hope for an Abatement of Punishment, and not any Expectation of Reward. The Supposition therefore in the Text, is by no means disagreeable to Reason; that, without the Coming of Christ into the World, Men could not but have *perished*: Those who *themselves* had sinned after the similitude of *Adam's* transgression, being necessarily liable to the wrath of God, and to the proportionable *actual Punishment* of their Sins; and those who had not sinned in their own Persons, being yet unavoidably in the Course of Nature involved in that *common Death*, from which *God* was not under any Obligation to rescue them; seeing it was his *Free Gift* to give them Being at all, and that even in the State of *Innocence* itself He had been under no Obligation to indue them with Immortality.

THIS seems, strictly and accurately speaking, to have been the True State of *All Mankind*, when considered as antecedent to the Promise of Christ's Coming. But it deserves also to be taken Notice of, that as in most other places, so in the Text likewise, 'tis probable that when men's *Perishing* is spoken of, it is not so much to be understood in that *strict Sense*, wherein *Every man whatsoever* is liable, more or less, to the Wrath of God; as in that more *general and usual Sense*, wherein both *Jews* and *Gentiles* are represented as being for the *greatest part* by an universal Corruption of Manners lost in Sin, and utterly fallen *short of the Glory of God*. The *Jews* had, in their Law itself, no Expiation appointed for great and wilful Transgressions;

gressions; And therefore through Christ was preached unto them the forgiveness of Sins; that by him, all that believe might be justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses, Acts xiii. 39. and Rom. viii. 3. What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin, condemned Sin in the Flesh. The Gentiles are justly represented by St. Paul, as being Enemies to God; walking generally in the Vanity of their Mind; Having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their Heart; who being past feeling, (having lost all sense of the natural and essential Difference of Good and Evil,) have given themselves over ——— to work all Uncleanness with greediness, Eph. iv. 18. This was too plainly the case of the greatest part of the Gentile-World in the Apostles Time. And though there be among Us, some Deniers of the Gospel of Christ, who pretend that by the Light of Reason, without any Belief of Revelation, they can make out the Obligations of Morality, and teach men the Practice of Virtue and their natural Duty both towards God and Man; yet the best and principal of those Reasonings they are inabled to make use of even concerning natural Religion itself, are evidently owing to that Light and Improvement, which has arisen from the Preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Had the Knowledge of the Christian Religion never been propagated amongst Us, we had still, like our barbarous Ancestors, been Worshipping of Stocks and Stones in the Darknes of most stupid Ignorance: And those very Persons, who now indeavour to turn against Christianity, those Arguments for the Reasonableness of

of Natural Religion, which without the Knowledge of the Gospel they would never have been able to discover; far from improving themselves, as they fondly imagine, under the Light of Nature, had then in all probability been destitute of the common Principles even of Civility and Humanity. 'Tis to the Mercy of the Gospel therefore, that these Persons owe their being *Now* in a State so different from that of the *Gentiles* in the Apostles Times, who, by their total Corruption, were in a State of absolute *Enmity against God*, and liable to his severest Wrath. Without the Knowledge of Christ, it cannot be doubted but the greatest part of *Us*, who now are apt to think so highly of our own Improvements, would have been in the Case of those, who *not liking to retain God in their Knowledge*, were given up unto *wile Affections*, and received in themselves *That recompence of their Error, which was meet, being drowned in Destruction and Perdition*. And those who, by escaping the greater Pollutions, would not indeed have been involved in the same *degree of Perdition* with the rest, (for the Judge of all the Earth will always do what is Right,) yet would have had *no Title* to that eternal Inheritance, that heavenly Kingdom, which is the *Free Gift* of God in Christ; an undeserved Gift, which nothing that Men could do of themselves, even when they had done their whole Duty, could at all have merited, or (without the Sanctification of the Spirit of God,) have qualified them for. For, *Except a man be born from above*, (so the words are in the original, which we render, *Except a man be born again*;) *Except a man be born from above, except he be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, Joh. iii. 3, 5. *Neither is there Salvation in any other,*

Acts iv. 12. For there is none other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved; i. e. whereby we can attain that Kingdom of Heaven, that free Gift of eternal Life, that Place peculiarly prepared by Christ for his Disciples out of the Many Mansions in his Father's House, that Weight of Glory and unspeakable Reward, undeserved even by our best Performances. Very agreeable to Reason therefore is the Supposition in the Text, that, without the coming of Christ into the World, men, in the manner before explained, could not but have perished.

2dly, THE Second thing to be considered in the Text, is; in what Sense 'tis affirm'd, that All who believe in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life. Of which Kind, there are frequent general Assertions in Scripture. Acts x. 43. Through his Name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive Remission of Sins; and ch. xiii. 39. By him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses. St. John in like manner in his First Epistle, ch. v. 12. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life; These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal Life. And our Saviour himself, in the Gospel, St. John iii. 36. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life; and in the words immediately before those of the Text, ver. 14. As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal Life. There have been some so absurd, as from these and other the like passages in the New Testament, to conclude that by Faith only viz. by a bare Assent
to

to the Truth of the Christian Doctrine, or by a confident Perswasion of their belonging to Christ, they should not fail of Obtaining Salvation. But the contrary is plain both from the Reason of the thing itself, and from numberless other passages of Scripture: That, when it is affirmed, that whosoever *believeth* in Christ, *shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*; the meaning is not, whosoever *professeth* or *pretends* to believe in him, but whosoever *really* believes in him, and *with Effect*; whosoever is *so* perswaded of the Truth of his Doctrine, as to embrace the *Terms* proposed by the Gospel, and to make them the Rule of his Life and Actions. For as, in all other cases, things are judged of not by their *mere Denomination* and *external Appearances*, but by their *inward Powers or Qualities*, and by their *real Effects*; and *Shadows* are not taken for *Substances*, nor *Pictures* for the *Things themselves* which they represent, notwithstanding their being called perhaps by the same *Names*: So, *believing in Christ*, is not barely professing to believe in him, but *believing in him* indeed; believing his Doctrine to be *True*; considering it accordingly as of the utmost *Importance*; endeavouring consequently to understand it *ourselves*, and not trusting ourselves to be imposed upon by *Others*; and finally, *governing ourselves by it* in all our Actions, in the whole Course of our Lives. For the word *Faith*, always contains in it the Notion of *Faithfulness* or *Fidelity*. And though the plain Reason of the Thing itself might be sufficient in so evident a Case; yet the Scripture is not wanting to explain it also in variety of Words. *He that believeth*, (says our Saviour in another place,) *and is baptized, i. e.* and enters into an obligation to *live suitably to That Belief*; *he shall be saved*. For, *not every one that*

that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. And being baptixed, saith St. Peter, is not the washing away of the filth of the Flesh, but the Answer of a good Conscience towards God. And the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, is the Faith which worketh, or evidences itself, by Love: For the End of the Commandment, saith St. Paul, is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience, and of Faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5.

ALL that believe therefore, are ALL that embrace and obey the Gospel. For These, Christ came into the World on purpose, that they might not perish, but have everlasting Life: And because the Gospel was commanded to be preached to every Creature, that is, to all mankind; and God has expressly declared, that he would have all men to be saved; and desireth not that any should perish, but that All might come to Repentance; therefore we may reasonably understand the Words in the Text, *whosoever believeth in him*, as if it had been Thus expressed: God gave his Son, that Every one, by believing in him; that every man, by his means, and by accepting the advantage and gracious Terms of the Gospel; might avoid perishing, and obtain everlasting Life. And This Sense of the Phrase is justified, by the Words immediately following the Text, ver. 17. *For God sent not his Son into World, to condemn the World, but that the World, that the whole World, through him might be saved.* Those to whom the Gospel is actually preached, have this Salvation clearly offered them, unless they reject it by their wilful Impenitence. The Jews and Patriarchs had it no less certainly, though more obscurely, reposed in the expectation of him that was to come:

And

And those who never heard either of the Law or the Gospel, yet have it *effectually* laid up for them, (though without their having any present Knowledge of it,) in that declaration of the Apostle, that *they which have not the Law, are a Law unto themselves*; and that *their uncircumcision, if they keep the Law, shall* (through the blood of Christ, though not explicitly made known amongst them,) *be counted to them for Circumcision*. Thus God shall universally be justified, when he appears in Judgment; and *All mouths shall be stopped before him*.

AND This may suffice for Explication of the 2d particular that was to be considered in the Text, *viz.* in what Sense it is affirmed, that *all who believe in Christ, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*.

3dly, We are in the last place to take Notice, that This Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ, is ascribed to the antecedent Love of God, the original Mercy and Goodness of the Father Almighty. God *so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life*. It is a false Notion which some men have taken up of God, and very injurious to Religion, to conceive God in his own Nature to be a severe and merciless Punisher; to look upon him as a Cruel Exerciser of irresistible Power, as an Object only of dread and horror; to imagine, that, contrary to his own Inclination, and as it were *against* his Will, he was prevailed upon by Christ to take Pity on his Creatures, as a Cruel and Passionate Man is sometimes over-ruled by his Friend, to be better than his Intention. No; All This is a very unjust Representation of God; The hard Speeches which ignorant or unrighteous men have spoken against him. The Scrip-
ture

ture on the contrary, as well as *Natural Reason*, always sets forth God as the Supreme Fountain of Goodness; the Preserver, not the Enemy and Destroyer, of his Creatures. 'Twas not the interposition of Christ, which *changed* the Mind of God; but 'twas the original Goodness and Love of God, which *appointed* for us the Interposition of Christ. To punish Sinners, and destroy Wickedness out of his Kingdom, is indeed the necessary Office even of That Governour who is Goodness itself; and therefore, in order to discourage Sin, he thought fit it should be pardoned by no easier a Method, than by the Incarnation and Death of his Son. Yet 'twas his Goodness only that moved him to contrive that Method; and his original Love to his Creatures, that put him upon so reconciling Mercy with Justice. God did not *bate* the World, and suffer the Intercession of Christ to prevail over that Hatred; but God *loved* the World, and *therefore gave* his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life. And hence it is, that the *Father* is stiled (by way of eminence) *God our Saviour*: Tit. iii. 4. 6. *The Kindness and Love of God our Saviour, ——— which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* But this is a Subject of such importance, that it deserves to be treated of more particularly in a following Discourse.

S E R M O N

S E R M O N X.

Of the LOVE of GOD towards Sinners.

St JOHN iii. 16.

*For God so loved the World, that he gave his
only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth
in him, should not perish, but have ever-
lasting Life.*

IN discoursing upon these Words, I have proposed to consider the following particulars; 1st, How and in what sense it is *præsupposed* in the Text, that without the Coming of Christ into the World, men *could not but* have perished. 2^{dly}, In what Sense it is affirmed, that *All* who believe in him shall not perish, but have everlasting Life. And 3^{dly}, that this Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ, is ascribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the Original Mercy and Goodness of the Father Almighty. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life. The Two former of these Propositions I have already discoursed of; and shall therefore at this Time proceed directly to the *Third*; namely,

namely, to observe, that in the Words of the Text, the Salvation of Men by the Coming of Christ, is expressly ascribed to the Antecedent Love of God, the original essential Mercy and Goodness of the Father Almighty. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son.* And This is necessarily to be observed, in Vindication of the essential *Goodness of God*, which is one of the primary Attributes of the Divine Nature; and in opposition to those, who while they think they magnify the Redemption purchased by the Blood of Christ, (which can never indeed be too much magnified in a *consistent* manner,) seem to forget the equal Necessity, of maintaining at the same Time all the original Attributes of God; and are not sufficiently aware of the Danger, of representing *one* Method of God's acting, as inconsistent with *another*; or *any* of God's actions *so*, as to be *contradictory* to his *Nature* or any of his *Attributes*. For since Truth cannot be contrary to itself; and *every* true Doctrine must of Necessity be agreeable, and in perfect harmony on all sides with every *other* true Doctrine whatsoever; 'tis of the utmost importance to Religion, that we take Care never to represent any *one* part of its Doctrine in such a manner, as to destroy *another*; least *That* also in its turn destroy the *present* Notion; and so *Both* give Advantage to the sceptical Unbeliever. 'Tis not easy to imagine, *how much* Religion has frequently suffered by this very means; and what occasion has been given to the profane Adversary to blaspheme, whilst the unwary carrying *particular* Doctrines too far, and pressing them by Arguments not well consistent with *other* Doctrines of equal Necessity, have afforded too plausible Grounds of Objecting against the *Whole*. What I am now speaking of, will best be understood,
by

by *instanci*ng in particular *Instances*. The *Justice* of God, may seem to be most highly magnified, by supposing that it puts an absolute *Necessity* upon him, either of inflicting an infinite Punishment, or of demanding an infinite Satisfaction. But they who so speak, ought at the same time to consider on the other hand, that they leave no room either for Goodness or Mercy: And that the Scripture on the contrary always speaks, even of the Satisfaction of *Christ*, not as a Price or Equivalent which made our Pardon *due* by a Claim of Right; but as a Means *freely* appointed, and *freely* accepted, by the mere Mercy and Compassion of the Father, who, as Supreme Governour of all things, remits voluntarily of his own Right, in what Measure and upon what Terms he *pleases*.

IN like manner the *Grace* of God, some Men imagine they greatly magnify, when they ascribe to its operation the *whole* and *entire* Progress of every good work. But if they would look at the same time on the other part of the Question, they might find, that by leaving nothing at all for the *Will of Man* to do, they make him to be a Subject no more capable of Religion, than the Beasts that perish, or even than lifeless Matter itself.

AGAIN; The merit of good Works, which the Church of *Rome* boasts of, is indeed effectually destroyed, by making good Works to be of *no importance* at all towards Justification, and by ascribing the *Whole* to *Faith only*. But they who so destroy Merit, should not be ignorant, that at the same time and with the same Argument, taking away the Necessity of Virtue and of good Manners, they destroy also the very Foundation of *all Religion*.

To give an instance or two of another kind. The *Authority of Councils*, or of any *humane Power*, to determine Matters of Faith; is indeed a most effectual Means, of putting a perpetual stop to all kinds of Schism, and to all Divisions whatsoever in Matters of Religion: But he that uses this Argument against an Adversary *before* him, ought not to be unaware, that there is another *behind* him, who makes use of the very same Argument even with greater Force against *Him*; For the Church of *Rome* has plainly the greatest and the most universal Weight of *human Authority*, which God ever permitted to oppress fair and impartial Inquiry after the Truth.

AGAIN; the *Divinity of Christ*, may seem to be most earnestly and zealously contended for, by those who confound it with the Supreme Independency and Self-existence of the Person of the Father: But if they considered on the other hand, how in so doing they either destroyed the most Fundamental Principle of all Religion, the *Unity* of God; or else the first Principle of *Christian* Religion, the *Being* of the Son of God; it would appear that they knew rightly, neither the Father nor the Son.

Lastly; To instance in the Doctrine of the Text, the *Coming of Christ* into the World for the *Redemption of Mankind*; It may seem indeed at first sight to be a pious extolling the Love of our Saviour, and the Greatness of the Work he undertook; to aggravate the natural Misery of Mankind, to represent in the terriblest Colours the Severity of the Justice of an incensed God, and to describe the Supreme Father and Creator of all things, as having no Thoughts of Pity or Compassion towards his perishing Creatures, till moved thereto as it were *against* his original Intention, by the Interposi-

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fiction of Christ. But they who thus argue, ought on the other hand to be aware, that 'tis no less injurious to Religion, to diminish the original Goodness and Compassion of the *Father of Mercies*, than 'tis pious to be worthily sensible of the greatness of the Redemption purchased by the Blood of Christ. A true and sincere Christian, will after a consistent manner magnify the Love of *Christ*, in dying for our Sins; and the Mercy of *God*, in sending him to die for that Purpose, in choosing and in accepting that Attonement. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son; (and the only-begotten Son so loved the World, that he was willing to be given, for our Redemption;) that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* The Salvation of Men therefore, is owing both to the *Redemption of Christ*, who gave himself for us; and to the antecedent *Love* and original essential Goodness of the *Father Almighty*, who was pleased to appoint and to accept that Sacrifice. Nor is it so great an Argument of the *Severity* of *God*, that he would not pardon Sinners without the Death of his Son; as it is of his essential *Goodness* and *Compassion*, that he would rather appoint his Son to die, than that sinful man should not be pardoned. He that appoints the *Means*, thereby declares his Choice and Approbation of the *End*: And if *God*, had not been by Nature, originally and essentially Good and Merciful, he would no more have accepted any Propitiation for Sin, than he would have pardoned it without any. Most unjustly therefore, and with great injury to Religion, is *God* sometimes represented as an implacable and cruel Judge, delighting in the destruction of Sinners, till they were taken (as it were) out of his Hands by the Interposition of Christ; This (I say) is a very

injurious Representation, of the Great God and Father of Mercies: For, the Coming of Christ, was not the first Cause of the Goodness and Love of God towards us; but the essential and eternal Goodness of God, was the cause and reason of the Coming of Christ. *God so loved the World*, says our Saviour, *that he gave his only-begotten Son*. It became the Supreme Governour of the Universe, to punish Sin: And yet he so loved the World, and had such Compassion upon the Work of his Hands, that he was willing to find an Expedient by which sinful man might be pardoned and saved, without giving encouragement to Sin; and therefore *he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life*.

THE words of the Text, are Each of them very emphatically significant, and strongly expressive of that glorious Attribute of the Divine Nature, his essential and eternal Goodness. *God*, even the Father and Lord of all things, who disposes all things according to the pleasure of his own Will, and whose Actions can be determined by Nothing Without Himself; *He so loved the World*, was so moved by the original and eternal Goodness of his own Nature, to have Compassion upon the Work of his Hands; that he *gave*, freely and out of mere Bounty, without any Obligation, and without any Constraint; he gave *his Son* out of his Bosom, his *only-begotten Son*, the *Son of his Love*, to die for the Sins of Men; that so, though it was not fit, in his Wisdom and Government of the World, that Sin should pass unpunished; yet by this means, Sinners believing on him, and being by him brought to Repentance, might not perish, but have everlasting Life. He might justly have sent his Son to take *Vengeance* upon

upon a sinful World ; to *destroy* it *totally*, as he did before *in part* at the overthrow of *Sodom* ; and to do it *finally*, as he had before done it *for a Time* at the general Deluge. But on the contrary our Saviour declares, that *Mercy* prevailed over Judgment ; that *God so loved the World*, (that is, was so moved by his own internal Goodness to have compassion upon Sinners,) that he *sent his Son into the World*, not to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved, Joh. iii. 17. In later Ages, Many have been used to speak otherwise ; and to represent God as clothed with the mere Severity of a rigorous and strict Judge, till his Wrath was, (as it were, *contrary to his own Intention*,) appeased and pacified by the Intercession of Christ. And This has made Some very pious Persons look upon God as an Object of the greatest *Terror*, who on the contrary ought above all things to be *Loved* as the most perfect Good : For, comparatively speaking, *There is None Good*, saith our Saviour, *but One, that is, God*. To Sinners indeed, so long as they continue *Impenitent*, God cannot but be very justly an Object of the utmost Dread. And so also indeed is even *our Saviour himself*, who died for them : For thus the Scripture emphatically represents their Case, Rev. vi. 16. that they shall say to the Mountains and to the Rocks, *Fall on us ; and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb*. To *impenitent* Sinners, the Wrath of the Lamb himself is no less terrible, than even the Face of him that sitteth upon the Throne. But on the contrary, to Sinners truly *penitent*, and to All who sincerely endeavour to obey the Will of God ; not only the Love of *Christ*, which is the *mediating Cause*, but the antecedent Love and essential Goodness

of the Father Almighty, which is the *primary and original Cause* of their Salvation, is always in Scripture represented and laid before them as a *Motive of Gratitude*, and as a principal Argument to excite in Them suitable Returns of Love and Obedience to Him, In the twentieth chapter of the *Acts*, ver. 24. St. Paul calls his Apostleship the *Ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God; the Gospel of the Grace of God, i. e. the gracious declaration of God's Love and Favour towards Mankind, manifested by Christ.* In his Epistle to the *Romans*, ch. i. ver. 1, 3, 5. he styles it the *Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we have received grace; Grace, that is, the gracious Manifestation of God's Compassion towards Sinners in the Gospel.* Ch. iii. 22, 25. he calls it the *righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* The *Righteousness of God* in sending Christ for the remission of our Sins, is a phrase that sounds harsh in modern language: But in the Jewish Speech, because *righteous and good men are apt to be moved with compassion*, therefore they have but one and the same Word to express both *Righteousness* and *charitable Pity*. From whence, both in the Old and New Testament, the word *Righteousness* must frequently be understood to signify, not strict *Justice*, but *Equity, Charity, Forbearance, and Compassion*: And particularly in the place now cited, the *Righteousness of God* in sending Christ, signifies, not any *Obligation* upon him in *Justice* so to do, but his *Goodness and Mercy* moving him to do it. In the same Epistle to the *Romans*, ch. v. 5, 6,

8, 15. he Thus describes the state of the Gospel; that the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts, because when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the Ungodly; And, that God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us; And that, as through the offence of One, viz. by the Occasion of Adam's Sin, Many be dead; so, and much more, the Grace of God and the Gift by Grace, i. e. the Love and Favour of God, by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto Many. And ch. viii. 32. He draws an Argument of further Hope, from this very consideration; He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with Him, also freely give us all things? 'Tis the same Argument, which the wife of Manoah had of old made use of, Judg. xiii. 23. If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering at our Hands. Again, in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, ch. v. the Apostle represents God, not only as consenting to our redemption by Christ, and being the original Author of it, ver. 18. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ; but he carries it still much further, ver. 20. As though God did beseech you by Us, we pray you (saith he) in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. This is not the Character of a merciless and Cruel Judge; to be himself not only the Author of man's Redemption by Sending his Son, but even to beseech us also to accept him when he is sent? As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn from his Ways and live. Nor are these figurative Expressions, or the incidental representations of Single Texts; but they are the whole Tenour of Scripture, inculcating This Notion

Notion perpetually, as of the greatest importance to Religion. Thus the same Apostle St. Paul again, in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, ch. ii. 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13. God, saith he, who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickned us together with Christ;— That in the Ages to come he might show the exceeding Riches of his Grace, in his Kindness towards us through Christ Jesus:— For we are His workmanship; created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them; Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands, that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and Strangers from the covenants of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. And in 2 *Thes.* ii. 13, 14. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, — because God hath from the beginning chosen you to Salvation, — whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ: And ver. 16. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, — stablish you in every good Word and Work. Again, 2 *Tim.* i. 9. God — hath saved us, and called us — according to his own Purpose and Grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began: And *Tit.* iii. 4, 6. After that the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour toward Man appeared; — which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: The expression

pression is *very* remarkable, that speaking of the *Love of the Father* towards us, he calls *Him* by the Title of *Saviour* in the *first* place: *The Kindness and Love of God our Saviour, which he shed on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* The Apostle *St. John* in like manner, *1 Job. iii. 1, 16. Behold (saith he) what manner of Love, the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God: Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because He (that is, Christ) laid down his Life for us: And ch. iv. 9. very nearly repeating the Words of our Saviour in the Text, In This (saith he) was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him.* These and numberless other the like passages in Scripture, do sufficiently declare, what I at first proposed to prove in Vindication of the Divine Attributes, *viz.* that the Salvation of men by the Coming of Christ, is and ought to ascribed primarily to the Antecedent Love and Original essential Goodness of the Father Almighty. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

It remains that I conclude, with drawing some useful Inferences from what has been said upon This Subject.

And *1st*, From hence we may observe, that every Doctrine of Truth, is consistent both with *itself*, and with every other Truth; and stands clear of Objections, equally on *All* sides. Upon some Representations of the *Severity of God*, and of the *Misery of Men*, Unbelievers have been encouraged to object: If perfect Goodness be an essential Attribute of the Divine Nature, how then could God, who is infinitely Good,
leave

leave all men to perish; antecedently to the consideration of the Coming of Christ? The Answer is obvious: *God* did not cause Men to perish, but their *own Wickedness* made it necessary for the Wisdom of a perfectly Good Governour to punish and destroy them. And yet his Justice and Wisdom were not more speedy in condemning them, than his Goodness in moving him to find a means of bringing them to *Recovery* by Repentance, and to *Salvation* by Christ. And This Goodness did not first manifest itself at the Coming of Christ; but the Apostle assures us it was *given us in Christ Jesus* before the World began, 2 Tim. i. 9. It was promised to *Adam*; it was repeated to the Patriarchs, it was declared by the Prophets; it was fulfilled in Christ: And both *before* and *since* the Coming of Christ, it has been made good to those, who observed the *Law*, and who obeyed the *Gospel*, and to those who (without the Knowledge of Either) have been (as St. Paul describes them) *a Law unto themselves*. In this whole Transaction, the *Goodness* of God has manifested itself abundantly, in doing what he was by no means *bound* to do, what no Power could have *constrained* him to do, what to *Himself* was *no Benefit* or Advantage; (For he could as easily out of the *Stones* have raised up Children unto *Abraham*, according to the elegant expression of St *John the Baptist*, as have prevailed with the real Children of *Abraham* to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance :) Lastly, 'twas doing That, which brought the *greatest Sufferings*, (not indeed *necessarily*, for That would not have been just; but *freely* and *voluntarily*,) upon *the Person who was most dear* to him, even his only-begotten and most beloved Son. And *What greater Instance of Goodness and Bounty* than This, can possibly

bly be conceived? Had God, *without* requiring any Propitiation at all, freely forgiven all Sins upon Repentance; This (no doubt) would by all have been esteemed an Act sufficiently evidencing that perfect Goodness and Mercy which is an essential Attribute of the Divine Nature: But now, freely and of his own meer Bounty, to *find out and appoint* a Propitiation; is, with regard to his *Goodness* towards *Us*, the very same thing, as *requiring no Atonement at all* would have been; and, at the same time, 'tis more agreeable to the Exercise of his *Other* Attributes, in the Government of the World. Neither therefore is the *essential Goodness* of God, in any wise inconsistent with that *Severity* against Sin, which made the Incarnation of Christ necessary to mens Salvation; Nor on the other side is that *Severity*, wherewith God condemns men antecedent to their redemption by Christ, at all inconsistent with the most perfect Notion of essential Goodness.

2dly, FROM what has been said, we may observe, of how great Importance it is to Religion, to frame right and worthy Notions concerning the *Attributes* and the *Actions* of God. The Foundation of Religion is the *Love* of God; and no Man can love whom he does not think well of. The Service of a Tyrant, is Slavery: And where there is not a Reverence, mixt with the Affection of *Love* as well as Fear, there the Obedience can be but Formal and External, without the Heart and without Life. 'Tis therefore of the greatest Consequence in Religion, that men entertain not hard and dishonourable Thoughts of God. To represent God, as choosing and delighting to make Men extremely miserable, or as being originally and of Himself mercilessly severe, may indeed at first Sight to in-

considerate

considerate Persons seem to magnify the Redemption purchased by Christ: But in reality, by destroying our natural Notion of God's essential Goodness, it destroys the first Principle and Foundation of Religion. God is, of Himself, the Father of Mercies: But because, in the All-wise government of the World, it was fit and necessary that Sin should not go unpunished, therefore this Mercy could not be manifested to us, but thro' the Son of his Love. Yet still 'twas the same God, who, moved by his *own* Compassion, showed us mercy in his Son; And the Scripture is against no persons more severe, than against those who speak hardly, and unworthily, of God. One part of the great and final judgment, as represented by St. Jude, is to *convince men of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him*, ver. 15. And severe is the reproof given upon this Account to the slothful Servant in the Parable, St. Luk. xix. 22. *Out of thine own Mouth will I judge thee;—Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow.* And 1 Sam. ii. 2, 3. *There is none Holy as the Lord;—let not arrogancy (in the original it is, let not Hard words) come out of your Mouth.* And Mal. iii. 13. *Your Words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have—walked mournfully before him? 'Tis therefore plainly injurious to religion, to entertain hard Thoughts of God, in diminution of his original and essential Goodness. Nevertheless on the contrary it ought also to be observed, that 'tis equally dangerous for Sinners to presume on the other side unreasonably upon his Love and Mercy. For as, before the Coming of Christ, men stood condemned*

demned for their Sins; so, after his Coming also shall they be condemned for their impenitency. And as the Justice of God did not prevent his Mercy from sending a Redeemer to save all true Penitents; so his Love in Christ will not prevent his Justice, from becoming to all incorrigible Sinners a consuming Fire.

3dly, FROM what has been said, we may learn how vain That distinction is, which has sometimes been made between Nature and Grace, as if the Gifts of Nature and those of Grace were opposite to each other; when in reality they are nothing else but the Gifts of the same God, derived to us originally from the essential Goodness of his Nature, and improved in us by his reconciled Goodness and Mercy through Christ.

4thly, FROM hence we may observe, how the Satisfaction of Christ is by no means inconsistent with the Notion of God's Free Pardon of Sin. For it was not, that the Satisfaction of Christ did in Strictness of Justice oblige him to pardon; but on the contrary, his Resolution to pardon Sin determined him freely to appoint and to accept that Satisfaction.

5thly, IF God so loved Us, the Application is easy, that We ought also to love Him. And how we are to do That, the Apostle St John tells us, 1 Joh. v. 3. This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments. Love towards a Superiour, consists properly in taking pleasure to do his Will; in delighting to obey him and to do things acceptable to him. Whoso therefore keepeth his Word, in Him verily is the Love of God perfected; hereby know we that we Are in Him, 1 Joh. ii. 5.

Lastly, IF God so loved us, then ought We also, after His example, to love one another. And This is the Inference of the same Apostle St John, 1 Joh. iv.

7—21; wherewith I shall conclude: *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the World, that we might live through Him; — Beloved, if God so loved Us, We ought also to love one another. — If a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And This commandment have we from Him, that He who loveth God, love his Brother also.*

SERMON

S E R M O N X I .

Of BELIEVING in G O D .

ROM. iv. 3.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for Righteousness.

BELIEF in *God* is the Foundation of all Religion both Natural and Revealed. For, *he that cometh to God must believe that He Is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Good Temper and Humanity, *may be* and often is the cause of many virtuous Actions; which, wherever they are found, ought never to go without their just commendation: But the *steady course* of a virtuous and religious life, uniform in all its parts and upon all occasions, resisting all the temptations of the World, overcoming all difficulties, and persevering to the End under all discouragements; this is a Superstructure which cannot be built upon a less strong Foundation than a firm Belief of a future State, and an Expectation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Now, as *without* Belief in God, there *can be no Religion*; so, where there is such Belief in God, the Scripture always in course supposes it accompanied with every other part of true Religion. The Root is always supposed

supposed to have the *Branches* joined with it ; and where a *Tree* is mentioned, 'tis always understood to be a *Tree* bearing its proper *Fruit*. A *Man*, never signifies the dead *Body* of a *Man* without the *Soul* or *Life* ; neither does *Faith* in Scripture-phrase ever mean the bare *Profession* of men's *Belief*, without *evidence* of its *reality* by its *Effects* ; except only where it is declared to be *dead* and *useless*. As the *Body*, saith St *James*, without the *Spirit*, is *dead* ; so *Faith* without *Works*, is *dead* also, Jam. ii. 26. As, in natural things, to separate *Causes* and *Effects*, to separate things in their own nature inseparable, to suppose the *Sun* to be without *Light*, or the *Fire* without *Heat*, is unnatural and absurd : so, in matters of *Religion* and *Morality*, to separate *Belief* and *Practise*, to separate the *Obligation* to any *Duty* from the *Performance* of it, is, morally speaking, monstrous and impossible : the one being as contrary to *Reason*, which is the *Rule* of *Morality*, as the other is contrary to the course and possibilities of *nature*. For this reason both in Scripture and in common Speech, the Name of any *One* eminent *Virtue*, is very usually put for the *Sum* of *All* ; and he that in the inspired Writings is commended particularly for *One* *Virtue*, is not thereby so much intended to be distinguished for *That*, as supposed to be thereupon indued with *all* others likewise. *Righteousness*, which properly signifies the particular *Duty* of fair and equitable Dealing between *Man* and *Man*, is in Scripture generally used for the whole *Practise* of true Religion in general. And the Character given to *Noah*, Gen. vi. 9. that he was a just man ; is in the very same verse explained to be, that he was a man perfect in his generation, and that he walked with God. In like manner, believing in God ; because 'tis the

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Foundation of *Obedience* to him, and wherever it is sincere, will naturally be attended with such *Obedience*, signifies therefore the same as living *religiously*. Which, as it is True concerning *Religion* in general, so in *Christianity* in particular it is still more usual, to put *Faith* for the whole *Practise* of *Virtue* and *Religion*; because, as the *Foundation* of *Religion* in general, is *Believing in God*; so the *Foundation* of *Christianity* in particular, is the *Belief* of that great *Act* of *God*, the raising his *Son* from the *Dead*, in order to judge the *World* in *Righteousness*. Which is what the *Apostle* observes, *ver. 23.* of this chapter: *It was not written, says he, for Abraham's sake alone, that his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness: But for Us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the Dead.* This is the reason, why the whole *Gospel* is, in the *New Testament*, so frequently called by the Name of *Faith*. The *Jewish Religion*, is, on the contrary, through the whole *New Testament*, usually stiled by the Name of *Works*; upon account of the numerous external *Ceremonies* and ritual *Observations*, which, though not in reality, yet, in the opinion and practise of the greater part of that Nation, were the main Body of their *Religion*, or that which they chiefly and most eagerly contended for. For so indeed, both in *antient* and in *modern* time, the corrupt disposition of *Mankind* generally leads them to this one constant *Error*; to value most in every *Religion*, that which is of *least* importance in it; *opinions* or *ceremonies*, which distinguish them into different *Parties*; and not *true Virtue, Righteousness* and *Goodness*, wherein all, who are indeed religious, do necessarily agree. The great *Question*, at the first preaching of the *Gospel*, was, whether the

Practise of Virtue required by Christ in *his* Religion, was sufficient to Salvation, without the continuation of the *Jewish* Ceremonies. The Argument used by the Apostle to prove that it *was* sufficient, was, that *Abraham* their Father was *himself* saved, not by the Observation of the *Rites* *They* laid such stress upon; but by the Practise of the very *same* Virtues which the Gospel now requires; insomuch that the Scripture expressly affirms, that the Gospel was before preached unto *Abraham*, *Gal. iii. 8.* And this Argument is at large urged in *Rom. iv. 3.* the present chapter, whereof my Text is a part. *Abraham's* Faith, says the Apostle, was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and it was so reckoned unto him, not only *after*, but *before* his circumcision, *ver. 10.* The acceptableness of his Faith therefore, did not depend upon the covenant of circumcision, as the *Jews* imagined; but upon that right and worthy *Notion of God* from which his Faith proceeded; and upon that consequent Obedience, of which his Faith was the cause; *ver. 20.* He staggered not at the promise of God through Unbelief; but gave Glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness. And the Application is; that it was not written for his sake alone, but for Us also, to whom it shall likewise be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the Dead; who was delivered for our offenses and rose again for our Justification. Which last words, are added to set forth the True Nature of Faith in Christ. For if the End of Christ's Death, was to deliver us from Sin; and the End of his Resurrection, to bring us unto Righteousness; 'tis evident that Faith in Christ is no otherwise of Benefit to us, then as it

tends

tends to destroy *Sin*, and establish *Virtue*. Which shows the extreme Folly and most dangerous Error of Those, who set up Faith in opposition to Moral Virtue; and make the Gospel of Christ a Form of Words only, and an *imaginary Speculation*, instead of being (what the Scripture always represents it) the way of *Righteousness* and the *Holy Commandment*.

HAVING thus briefly explained the nature and ground of the Apostle's Argument in general; we may now easily understand the meaning of the words of the Text in particular: *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness*. *Abraham* was the great Example of Righteousness, so as to be styled in Scripture (by way of eminence) *the Friend of God*, and the Father of *the Faithful*. Ecclus. xlv. 19. *He was a great Father of many people; in glory was there none like unto him, who kept the law of the most High, and was in covenant with him.* (Rom. iv. 16.) Now This Righteousness, which the Son of Sirach calls keeping *the Law of the most High*, the Apostle calls the righteousness of *Faith*, in opposition to that of *Works*. By the *Works* therefore which he disparages, 'tis plain he means *Rites and Ceremonies*, not the *Practise of Virtue*; and by *Believing in God*, which he so highly commends, he means *True Religion*. By adhering to this true Religion, *Abraham* made proof of his believing in God, which was counted to him for righteousness; and *We*, if we so believe in God, shall have it imputed for righteousness unto *Us* likewise.

IN order therefore to make this observation of the Apostle useful to us in Practise, it may be proper to consider distinctly, 1st, wherein consisted that *Faith* of *Abraham*, which the Text says was counted to him for

for righteousness ; and 2dly, *What* it is, that is particularly required of *Us*, when *we* likewise are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God*.

I. Now the Account which the Scripture gives us of the *Faith* of *Abraham*, is this:

1st, *IT* consisted in his believing the *true* God, the Maker and Governour of the Universe, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The Nations among whom he sojourned, were all Idolaters ; Worshippers of dead men, worshippers of the Kings who had reigned over them in their life-time : For *That* was the original of all the Heathen-Idolatry. Every City or Territory had its own Prince, and the World was divided into small Kingdoms. These Kings were honoured by their Flatterers, with Honours during their *Lives* too nearly divine ; and after their *Deaths*, they were by the ignorant people worshipped as Gods. The Worship paid to such Gods of their own making, was accordingly superstitious ; and the corruption of their *manners* was answerable to the absurdity of their *religion*. From these, *Abraham* separated himself, and believed in the true God the Maker of all things ; and for the sake of that Belief, forsook his native country. *Heb. xi. 8. By Faith Abraham went out, not knowing whither he went, and sojourned in the land of Promise as in a strange country ; for he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.* He believed that the God of the whole World, whom alone he worshipped, was able to *preserve* him in the present Life, or *reward* him in another that should come ; and This *Faith* was counted unto him for righteousness. Some have disputed, whether the Patriarchs under the old Testament had any express Knowledge of the Life to come. But that they *had*, the Apostle's Argument is a plain

a plain demonstration, Heb. xi. 13. They who having seen the promises afar off, confessed themselves to be Strangers and Pilgrims in the Earth, declare plainly that they seek a ——— better country, ver. 16.

2dly, As Abraham's Faith consisted in general in believing the True God, so in particular it manifested itself in such Acts of Dependence upon him, as became a person who had just and worthy Notions of the True God whom he served; And for This, it was counted unto Him for righteousness. Thus St Paul expressly argues, in the case of Abraham's receiving the promise of a Son, Rom. iv. 17. Before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were, He against Hope believed in Hope, ——— giving glory to God, and being fully perswaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform; and therefore (saith he) it was imputed to him for righteousness. Thus likewise in the case of offering up his Son, the excellency of his Faith consisted in This, that it was founded upon that Great Principle of Religion, the expectation of a Resurrection from the dead. He accounted, saith St Paul, that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a Figure, Heb. xi. 19. These last words from whence also he received him in a Figure, are by Expositors understood to signify, Isaac's near escape from Death, when he was just upon the point of being offered. But This being an Event not foreseen by Abraham before it came to pass, could not be to him an Argument at That Time, to confirm his Faith. And therefore I think the words will bear another sense, much more pertinent to the Apostle's intention. Abraham, saith he, accounted, that God was able to raise him
him

him up even from the Dead; and he had the more reason so to account, because he had already once before received him from the dead in a figure; namely, at the time of his Birth, when he sprang from Parents as good as dead; as the same Apostle expresses in the very same chapter. *Abraham's Reasoning was This; (and it was very pertinent and strong;) The same God who could cause Isaac to receive life at first from Parents already dead through Age, could as easily the second time raise him to life again, when he himself should be dead.*

3dly, THE Faith of *Abraham* was not a Speculation or mere Credulity, but a Principle of Obedience and True Holiness. *Gen. xviii. 19. I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him.* These words of God himself in the Old Testament, are sufficiently clear. But because there arose afterwards some mistakes about this matter; St *James*, in express decision of a point of controversy in His time, alleges the very same example: *Ch. ii. 21. Was not Abraham our Father justified by Works, when he offered Isaac his Son upon the Altar? Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect! And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness.* 'Tis very remarkable that these last words, which in the Text are cited by St *Paul* for the magnifying the efficacy of Faith, are at the same time cited by St *James*, to show the equal necessity of Works of Righteousness. *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for Righteousness. Abraham was justified by*

by *believing* in God; but the Reason why his Faith was so highly accepted, was because the *Effect* of it was Righteousness of Life.

4thly and Lastly; THE Faith of *Abraham* is opposed in Scripture, just as the Faith of Christians is, not to the Works of *Virtue*, but to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Law of *Moses*. Gal. iii. 7. *They that are of Faith*, saith St Paul, that is, they who believing in Christ expect Salvation through the real Holiness of the Gospel, and not by such outward Forms and Ceremonies as the *Jews* observed; the same (saith he) are the children of *Abraham*; ver. 6. *Even as Abraham believed God*, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And Rom. iv. 13. *The Promise was not to Abraham or to his Seed through the Law, but through the righteousness of Faith*; ——— To the end the Promise might be sure to all the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to That also which is of the Faith of *Abraham*, who is the Father of us all. His meaning is: The Promises of God to *Abraham*, the Promise of giving him a better Country than that which he went out from; the Promise of being his God and his exceeding great Reward; the Promise of making him Heir of the World; (Rom. iv. 12.) (all which, the reason of the thing shows, and the Apostle in the eleventh to the *Hebrews* expressly declares, to be meant of the heavenly *Canaan*, the new *Jerusalem*, whereof the Land of Promise was but a Type and a Shadow;) These Promises were made to *Abraham*, not as circumcised, not as the Father of the Nation of the *Jews*; but as having that exemplary Faith, that firm Belief in the One True God the Maker of all things, that readiness to obey him in opposition to the universal corruption of an idolatrous World, and that dependence upon God's

being

being finally a Rewarder of them who diligently serve him without Any Prospect of temporal Advantage; which made this great man to be deservedly esteemed the Father of all Faithful and Holy Men, who should acceptably serve the same God, in all Ages and in all Nations of the World.

THIS is the Account the Scripture gives us of that *Faith of Abraham*; which was accounted to him for *Righteousness*. The right Understanding of which matter, removes at once all the Difficulties concerning the Notion of Faith and Works, which has occasioned so many vain controversies in the Christian World; and at the same time may serve to instruct us, (which was the

II. *Second* thing I proposed to speak to;) *what* it is, that is particularly required of *Us*, when *We* likewise are in Scripture commanded to *believe in God*. And this evidently implies,

1st, BELIEVING his *Being*: That is; not only, in a Speculative manner, believing that there is an infinitely Perfect Being, in the notional way wherein Philosophers describe him; which may easily be separate from any religious Affection; but 'tis having upon our Minds a constant Sense of his being, in the moral sense, the Supreme Governour, and righteous Judge of the World. *This* Belief of the Being of God, is That only, which because it will certainly produce the Fruits of Virtue, shall therefore certainly be accounted unto us for Righteousness.

2^{dly}, THE Duty of Believing in God implies, not only our believing his Being, and his being Governour and Judge of the World; but also that we have *worship* and honourable *Apprehensions* of his *Nature* and *Attributes*. For when any man thinks he believes in

God,

God, without attending at the same time to those Perfections and Excellencies, which constitute the true and real Notion of God, he deceives himself with that empty fallacy of putting *Words* for *Things*; and instead of placing his Religion in obeying the Commands of the True Governour of the Universe, by the practise of all Holiness, Righteousness, and Virtue; he will be apt to content himself with worshipping he knows not *what*, and he knows not *how*, with a blind Superstition, without Understanding, and without any real improvement in Goodness. This is naturally the Effect of ascribing *Absurdities* to God, as those of the Church of *Rome* do in the matter of *Transubstantiation*; or of teaching things concerning him contrary to the common and obvious Notions of *Righteousness and Goodness*, as those have done, who contend for the Doctrine of absolute and unconditionate *Predestination*. The Religion of such men usually consists more in an useless amazement of Mind, than in any real Practise of Virtue; Than which, nothing can be more dishonourable to God, or more injurious to Religion. For if a wise and good *man* had rather his Name should not be mentioned at all, than that there should be joined with it a Character contrary to Wisdom and Goodness; much more must it needs be unacceptable to God, that men should *frame* of him such Notions as are not honourable to *Him*; and *serve* him with such a Religion, as is of no True Benefit to *Them*. God governs the *natural* World with absolute Power and Wisdom; and the *moral* World with perfect Righteousness, Justice, and Goodness. In the imitation and practise of these Virtues consists the true Essence of Religion towards *men*; and in the acknowledgment of, and dependence upon, these Perfections of the Divine Nature, consists True

Faith towards *God*. Herein consisted the Faith of *Abraham*; that, in the midst of an idolatrous World, he constantly retained this Notion of the One invisible God of the whole Universe; and trusted in him, and served him, and obeyed him accordingly, in all Holiness and Righteousness of Life; depending upon a remote and invisible Reward; and therefore he was stiled, the *Friend of God*, and was set forth as a perpetual Example of True Faith to all succeeding generations. Look at the generations of old, saith the Son of *Sirach*, and see; did ever any trust in the Lord, and was confounded? or, did any abide in his fear, and was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise, that called upon him?

3dly, BELIEVING in God, signifies believing his *Revelations* also, as well as what *Nature* teaches concerning Him. The Obligations of *revealed Religion* are founded upon the same ground, as the obligations of *natural Religion*; and they mutually strengthen and confirm each other. By the dictates of *Nature* it was reasonable to expect that God would vouchsafe to make more clear to men his Will by *Revelation*; and in all true *Revelation* is contained a fuller enforcement and more strong confirmation of the Law of *Nature*. Men therefore who in Christian countries, where the Gospel is preached, pretend to believe in the *God of Nature*, and yet at the same time reject the revelation of the *Gospel*, which is so agreeable to and perfective of the Law of *Nature*; do, generally speaking, in pretense only, and not in reality, show any more regard to *natural* than to *revealed Religion*; falling for the most part into absolute Atheism. Whereas they who seriously believe, and practise the Duties of *natural Religion*, are generally disposed to embrace also consequently the

Revela-

Revelation of the Gospel. Those whom *the Father*, the God of *Nature*, draweth, come easily to *Christ*, who is the Author of the Gospel. The only thing necessary here to be observed, is, that for preventing with due care the *Frauds* and *Impositions* of men, who have sometimes attempted (as particularly in many Instances in the Church of *Rome*) to impose their own Inventions instead of Divine Revelation; diligent inquiry ought always to be made into the *evidence* of the *Facts*, and into the *nature and reason* of the thing. For a doctrine, even not unreasonable in itself, yet is not to be admitted as a Divine Revelation without good evidence of the *Fact*: Neither on the contrary can any pretense of evidence of *Fact*, be sufficient for the admission of a Doctrine *impossible or absurd in itself*. Transubstantiation has no evidence of being revealed: But had there been never so great an appearance of Evidence for it, yet it could not be received, because the manifest *Absurdity of the thing*, would always be a stronger Argument *against* its being an Object of Faith, than any other Evidence could be *for* it. Every Revelation, *must* be agreeable to the *Nature of God*, and to the *possibility of things*. Our Saviour himself alleges it as an Argument, for the Proof of the Truth even of his *Miracles* themselves; that his Doctrine was directly contrary to the Power and Interest of evil Spirits, and tended in its own Nature to the Glory of God, and to the Benefit of Men: Otherwise the Objection of the Pharisees would have been of some force, that he cast out Devils by the Prince of the Devils. In the *Old Testament*, the greatest Difficulty of This kind, is the Instance of *Abraham* offering up his Son; which if it was a thing unalterably evil in itself, it may be objected could never be a Revelation from God. For

the clearing of which it is therefore to be observed, that of things Evil or Immoral there are three sorts. Some things are Evil, only because prohibited by a positive Law ; and these it is evident are no longer evil, than the Law which forbids them continues in Being. Other things are Evil unalterably in their own Nature ; even so as that it would be a direct contradiction and absolute impossibility, to suppose that God should at any time whatsoever, or upon any occasion, command them : Such are *Hatred of God and Goodness, the worship of False Gods, a malicious or cruel Temper of Mind* ; and the like. Now between these two sorts of Evils there is a third ; which is not only evil, because contrary to any positive Law, but contrary also even to the Law of Nature itself : Yet not so unalterably, but that in some particular circumstances, when expressly commanded by the God of Nature, it may cease to be contrary to that Law. And of this kind, is the taking away the Life of an innocent man ; as in the case of *Abraham* and his Son. Which though contrary to the Law of Nature, to be done by the Will of Man, or of any Power on Earth ; yet may without any inconsistency be in a particular case commanded by God : Because God who gave life, may take it away when he pleases, either by a natural Disease, or by any other Instrument which he thinks fit. Only he who in such a case shall pretend to be an Instrument in the hand of God, must show a Commission or Revelation as clear as was That to *Abraham* : Otherwise all Impiety and Superstition may be brought in the place of Religion ; as those of the Church of *Rome*, under pretense of doing service to God, are perpetually destroying the best of his Servants.

ably and Lastly ; As believing in God, signifies believing his Revelations, as well as his Nature and Attributes ; so it always includes Obedience to him likewise, when it means That Faith which shall be counted to us for Righteousness. Abraham's Faith, saith St James, wrought with his Works, and by Works was his Faith made perfect. And concerning Ours in like manner St Paul declares, Rom. x. 10. With the Heart man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth confession is made unto Salvation.

SERMON XII.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

TIT. ii. 11, 12.

For the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men: Teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World.

IN the First Chapter of This Epistle, the Apostle instructs Titus in the particulars of his own Duty; exhorting him to be diligent in *studying*, stedfast in *holding fast*, painful in *teaching*, and, above all things, *exemplary in practising* the Christian Doctrine. In the second chapter, he directs him what instructions he should give to *Others*; to persons in every circumstance of Age, and in every Station of Life; That men of all Ranks and Conditions whatsoever, of all degrees and of all capacities, might know how, by a suitable Behaviour, to *adorn in all things the Doctrine of God* our Saviour; whose *kindness and Love* has been *shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ* our Saviour, *cb. iii. 6.* The Apostle, I say, having in *This*, and the foregoing chapter, instructed both Titus himself, and

and those who were *under his charge*, in the Great Branches of Moral Duty ; he proceeds in the words of the Text to *inforce the Practise* of those Duties by this *emphatical Argument* ; that the very *End and Design* of the Gospel of Christ was to *teach* men the necessity of such Practise : To *teach* them, that *denying ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, they should live *soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World* ; Looking for that *Blessed Hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ* ; Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works*.

SOBRIETY, Righteousness, and Godliness, are the Ends for the promoting whereof, Christ came into the World. Whatever therefore in Any Profession of Religion tends not to promote these Ends, is *useless and deceitful* : Whatever tends in any degree to *frustrate* them, is *pernicious and destructive*. By This Rule, may easily be tried the real and intrinsic Value of every doctrine ; by This, may be weighed the degree of dangerousness of every Error, in Religion. Every Notion and Speculation whatsoever, every Form and Ceremony of Any Kind, every external Rite, every inward Opinion, concerning Faith, or Grace, or the Merits of Christ, or any other Doctrine whatever it be : So far as it leads and influences Men to be more truly virtuous and good, to have a more constant Sense of God upon their Minds, to be more sober and temperate, to have a more strict Regard to Truth, Justice, Equity and Charity, in the whole Course of their Actions ; so far it makes them better Christians. But if, on the contrary, any of these things be (as they too frequently are, among All Professions of Men ; If they be)

be) at any time looked upon as *Equivalents*, to be accepted of God in the *room* and in the *stead* of true Virtue ; they are Then really destructive of all Religion. For *whosoever* (says our Lord) *shall break one of these Least Commandments*, (speaking of the eternal Duties of the Moral Law,) and *shall teach men so*, (that is, shall upon Any pretense whatsoever teach men to look upon Other things as of more importance than these ;) *he shall be called the Least in the Kingdom of Heaven* ; (Matt. v. 19.) that is, he shall of all men be the farthest from ever entring therein. The Reason why Christ gave himself for us, was, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good Works*. The Cause, for which was revealed *that Blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*, was, that it might be an effectual Support to men in the *Practise of Virtue*, under the various Temptations of a vitious and unrighteous World. The End and Design, for which God's *graciousness* towards men in the *Forgiveness of Sins*, was declared in the Gospel ; was to *teach us the necessity of Obedience* for the future, and to *incourage us in our sincere Endeavours* after it. The Grace of God, *that bringeth Salvation*, hath appeared to all men ; Teaching us, *that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World*.

IN the following Discourse upon These Words, I shall 1st explain *What* is meant by the Grace of God. And 2^{dly}, I shall consider, *How* This Grace of God Teaches us ; teaches us in a *peculiar and emphatical manner* ; that, *Denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World*.

I. I N

I. IN the *First* place, the *proper* Signification of the word *Grace*, is *Favour* : *Favour* in such a sense, as denotes *Mercy* and *Goodness* in a *Superiour*, either *remitting* somewhat of his *Own Right*, or *conferring* somewhat *Beneficial* upon *Others* ; freely, and without Any obligation of *Debt*. And because *This* may be done after *various manners*, and in a great *diversity* of *Instances* ; hence the word *Grace* in *Scripture*, is accordingly applied, in a *proportionable diversity* of *Significations*.

SOMETIMES it signifies those *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* of the *Holy Ghost*, by which the *Apostles* were enabled to *demonstrate* the *Truth* of their *Commission*, to *preach* their *Doctrine* with *Authority*, to *convince* *Gainstayers* with *Evidence*, to *govern* the *Churches* by a proper distribution of different *Trusts* and *Offices*. And the *Gifts* or *Powers*, by which the *Apostles* were enabled to do all these things with *extraordinary Efficacy* and *Success*, are *Therefore* called *Grace*, because they are not at all *Natural Acquisitions*, but *Free Gifts of God* ; distributed to every one *severally*, not according to the *Will of Man* ; but at such *times*, and in such *proportions*, and to such *Persons*, and for such *Purposes*, as *God himself* pleased. Thus *Rom. i. 5. By whom we have received Grace and Apostleship, for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations.* That is ; Who has *graciously* been pleased to *send forth* Us the *Apostles*, to *preach* with *mighty Works* and *Demonstration* of the *Spirit*, in order to bring back the *Nations* to the *Knowledge of God* and to the *Practise of Virtue*, by the *Arguments* and *Motives* of the *Gospel of Christ*. In like manner, *ch. xii. 6. Having then Gifts, differing according to the Grace that is given to us,* (that is, according to the good pleasure of God
in

in distributing those Gifts;) *whether it be prophecy, let us prophesy, (or whatever Gift it be, let us imploy it diligently,) according to the proportion of Faith, i. e. according to the Nature and Use of the Gift or Power or Trust committed to our Charge or Fidelity: So the word Faith evidently signifies in This place; and above, in ver. 3. according as God has dealt to every man the Measure of Faith, i. e. according to the nature and degree of the Power committed to every man's Trust or Faithfulness.* Had This signification of the word been generally attended to, which is manifestly the Apostle's true meaning; it might have prevented abundance of weak unintelligible things, which have sometimes been spoken concerning God's giving men Faith, and the like. But This, by the way. Another remarkable Passage of the same Apostle, where the word Grace plainly signifies again the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, is in *Eph. iv. 7, 11. Unto every one of us is given Grace, according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ: — And he gave Some Apostles, and Some Prophets, and Some Evangelists, and Some Pastors and Teachers.* This therefore is the First Sense, wherein the word Grace is frequently used in the New Testament: It denotes the extraordinary Powers wherewith God was graciously pleased to indue the Apostles, in order to enable them to propagate the Gospel with Authority and Success.

In Other Passages, the same word is made use of to signify That extraordinary Assistance and Support, which God has sometimes been pleased to afford his Servants, under extraordinary Difficulties and Trials. And This is called Grace, because considered as given particularly upon extraordinary occasions, over and above the general Supports, arising from the Considerations of Reason,
and

and from the *Motives and Promises of the Gospel in general*. Thus when St Paul under some particular Affliction and Distress, which he calls *The Messenger of Satan to buffet him*, prayed with repeated importunity to have this Trouble removed from him; The Lord said unto him, *2 Cor. xii. 9. My Grace is sufficient for thee*. And when our Saviour foretells his disciples, that they should be *persecuted and brought before Kings and Rulers for His name's sake*; he tells them at the same time, which is another Instance of This Grace or Gracious Goodness of God, which will not suffer men to be tempted above what they are able; He tells them they need not be solicitous, *what Answer to make*; For the Holy Ghost should teach them in That Hour, and He himself would give them a Mouth and Wisdom, which All their Adversaries should not be able to gain-say or resist; *Luke xii. 11; and xxi. 14.*

A Third sense, wherein the word Grace is sometimes made use of in the *New Testament*, is to express such Moral Virtues, as are the Effects of men's being influenced, by the *Spiritual Motives of the Gospel*; and the Practice of which, preserves men in the Favour of God, and recommends them to his Gracious Acceptance. Thus *Eph. iv. 29. Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying; that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers*; That is, that it may promote the Practice of Virtue in the World. And, *2 Pet. iii. 18. Grow in Grace*; That is, improve more and more in all virtuous Behaviour, which may render you Acceptable in the Sight of God. After the same manner of speaking, the Apostle St Paul, *2 Cor. viii. 1*, styles the extraordinary liberality of the *Macedonian Churches* to the Poor, the Grace of God bestowed on them. And his direction

direction to Titus, to perswade the Corinthians to imitate that exemplary liberality, he thus expresses, ver. 6. *We desired Titus, that, as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same Grace also.* And then he adds his Own exhortation, still in the very same Style, ver. 7. *Therefore as ye abound in every thing, in Faith, in Utterance, and Knowledge, and in all Diligence, and in your Love to Us; see that ye abound in This Grace also, the Grace of Liberality and Charity.* In these Passages, 'tis as evident as possible, that the word *Grace* denotes the very same, as *Christian* or *Moral Virtue*. And *Moral Virtues* are plainly for *This* reason called by the name of *Grace*, because they proceed from and are founded in a *Regard to God* in general, and in particular to his *Will* revealed under the *Gracious Dispensation of the Gospel of Christ*. They are the *Effects* of men's *Conversion to God*; the *Effects* of all the *external and internal Influences of the Gospel*; the *Fruits of the Spirit*. And not only in the *Language of Scripture*, in the *Apostles* times; but even at *This day*, in *common Speech*, the word (*Grace*) still retains in many Cases the same Signification. Thus when *abandoned and debauched persons* are vulgarly stiled *Graceless*; the Intent of That denomination never is to excuse, but always to aggravate to Fault of the persons so stiled. It never means any Defect on God's part, as if He afforded them not the *Capacities of Religion and Virtue*; but always on *their own part* only, that All the Means and Assistances of Religion are bestowed on them in vain, and have not Influence sufficient to reform them.

To proceed: Another Signification of the word *Grace* in Scripture, is to express that *merciful Acceptance of Repentance and Amendment*, whereby God is pleased,

not out of any obligation of Justice, but in gracious Goodness, to restore men to his Favour. In *This* sense, St Paul says of Himself, *I am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God: But by the Grace of God, (that is, by his gracious Acceptance of my sincere Intentions,) I am what I am.* (1 Cor. xv. 9.) In like manner, when the *Doctrine of Christ*, as distinguished from the *Law of Moses*, is by the Evangelist styled *Grace and Truth*; (Joh. i. 17.) and when the *Apostles preaching*, is by St Luke called *The Word* (or Declaration) of God's Grace; (Acts xiv. 3.) and when St Paul declares, that repenting Sinners are justified freely by his Grace; (Rom. iii. 24.) and blames those, as the most pernicious Perverters of his Doctrine, who think they may continue in Sin, that Grace may abound: (Rom. vi. 1.) 'Tis evident the word *Grace*, in all these Passages, signifies That merciful and compassionate disposition of the Divine Nature, whereby God freely remits of his Right of Punishment; and receives penitent Sinners upon more gracious Terms, and to greater degrees of his Favour, than he was bound to do by any obligation of Justice.

AND hence it is, that, in the Last place, the Gospel itself, as being the Great and Standing Declaration of God's Mercy and Goodness towards men, shown forth in the free Pardon and Forgiveness of Sin, upon the gracious Terms of Repentance and Amendment; hence the Gospel itself, I say, is in the New Testament very frequently meant by This Phrase, *the Grace of God*. Thus Col. i. 6. *Since the day ye heard of it, and knew the Grace of God in Truth: That is, from the Time ye were instructed in the Doctrine of the Gospel.* And 2 Thes. ii. 16. *Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, — bath given us — good Hope*
through

through Grace; that is, through the gracious Promises of the Gospel. Again; 2 Tim. ii. 1, *Thou therefore, my Son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus,* (that is, Be Faithful and Diligent, in preaching the Gospel;) *And the things that thou hast heard of Me,* — *the same commit thou to Faithful men, who shall be able to teach Others also.* In like manner; the Prophets — prophecying of the Grace that should come, (1 Pet. i. 10.) is, their foretelling the Revelation of the Gospel. And Some among the Galatians, falling from Grace; (Gal. v. 4.) means their rejecting the Privileges of the Gospel of Christ, when they claimed to be justified by their observing the Ceremonies of the Jewish Law. To give but one Instance more: The Question St Paul puts, Rom. vi. 15. *Shall we sin, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace?* is, in sense, plainly This: Shall the Mercy, the Compassion and gracious Goodness of God, declared in the Gospel much more expressly than under the Mosaick Law; shall it be an encouragement to us to continue in Sin? God forbid. And Thus therefore likewise in the words of the Text: *The Grace of God*, that is, the gracious Doctrine of the Gospel, has been declared to all men; Teaching us, that Denying Ungodliness, and so on. The Apostle here very expressly explains his own words. He is not speaking of That Grace of God, which operates in or upon men; but of That Grace which Teaches them, that Denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.

The Additional words, (*which bringeth Salvation*), are, in the Original, of ambiguous construction; and may equally signify, either, as we render them, *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation*, bath appeared

to all men ; or, *The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing Salvation unto all men.* If we understand them in the former sense, (*The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men ;*) they are *Then* of the same import with those other expressions, Rom. x. 18. *Their Sound is gone forth into all the Earth, and their Words unto the Ends of the World ;* and Col. i. 23. *The Hope of the Gospel which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature under Heaven.* If they are understood in the Latter sense ; (*The Grace of God hath appeared, bringing Salvation unto all men ;*) the meaning of them *Then* is the same, as in the following Expressions of Scripture ; that Christ *has abolished Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel ;* that God *will have All men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth ;* being not willing that *Any should perish, but that All should come to Repentance.* In whichsoever of these two senses the words of the Text be taken ; the *Meaning* of them, upon the whole, amounts to the *Same ;* that the Design of God in the gracious Declarations of the Gospel, is to bring *all men*, by the Promise of Pardon, to Repentance and Amendment *here*, and thereby to eternal Salvation *hereafter.* The *Sense* of the Proposition is plain : The only difficulty here, is that which arises, and indeed very obviously, from comparing the *actual Event* of things, with the *Declarations* of God's gracious *Intention and Design.* If God *designed* by the gracious Terms of the Gospel, to bring *all men* to Salvation ; how comes the *Extent* of it to be confined within so narrow a Compass, and the *Effect* of it to be in experience so inconsiderable, even where in Profession it seems to have universally prevailed ? The Answer to This, is ; that in all *moral* matters, the *In-*
tention

intention or Design of God, never signifies (as it does Always in Natural things) an Intention of the Event, actually and necessarily to be accomplished ; but (which Alone is consistent with the nature of Moral things,) an Intention of all the Means, necessary on His part, to the putting That Event into the Power of the proper and immediate Agents. For instance : With intention that all men should act reasonably, God indues them with the Faculty of natural Reason. The Event, whether after This they will act reasonably or no, must depend upon their own Choice and Care : Because the very Faculty or Power of acting reasonably, does necessarily and essentially include in it a Power of acting likewise unreasonably. The case is the very same, with respect to the Method of bringing men to Salvation by the Gospel. God has commanded the Gospel to be preached to the whole World. The merciful Conditions, and the gracious Means and Assistances of the Gospel, are sufficient to bring all men to Salvation ; except such as either wilfully reject it, when fairly and reasonably proposed to them ; or who professing to embrace it, yet obey it not. For, as for Those to whom it was either never at all, or (which is much the same thing,) never reasonably preached, their case is exactly the same with regard to the Gospel, as the case of such others is with regard to Natural Reason, who either totally or in great measure want That natural Faculty. Every man shall be accepted according to what he Hath, and not according to what he hath not, 2 Cor. viii. 12. God therefore willeth all men to be saved ; (just in the same manner as he willeth all men to act rationally :) And yet This does not hinder them from destroying themselves by wilfully rejecting That Salvation. For tho' the Grace of God has indeed appeared to all men, and is sufficient

also to bring all men to Salvation; yet it effects This no otherwise than by *Teaching them*, as the Apostle proceeds in the Text, (which is the *Second particular* I proposed to consider;) *teaching them*, in a peculiar and emphatical manner, *that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.*

II. Now *How* the Gospel does This, is not a point which needs much *inlargement*. 'Tis what our Saviour and his Apostles inculcate in the *whole New Testament*, from the One End to the Other. The *Practise of Virtue*, or *Living soberly, righteously, and godly*; is the *End and Design* of all Religion. God is Himself a Being of infinite *Holiness and Goodness*; and by no other way than by *imitating* these Perfections, can Any Creature become acceptable in his Sight. By the *Light of Nature and Reason* therefore, men are bound to the *Practise* of these Virtues. But because their very *Best Performances* are always *defective*; and Those who have *transgressed* in any plain Instances, stand in need of particular *Pardon*; and Methods of *mens own Invention* to appease the Anger of God, had continually introduced numberless vain and delusive *Superstitions*; therefore, in compassion to the Weakness of Mankind, and to cure these Great Evils, God was pleased to send them an Instructor from Heaven, to *teach* them in a *more effectual* manner, than any ever before discovered, *how that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World.* The Gospel, I say, teaches us *This*, in a method *more effectual*, than Any foregoing: By giving, even to the *Meanest* Capacities, the plainest and fullest, the perfectest and most distinct Account, of the Excellency and Extent of *Moral Virtue*; as in our Saviour's

Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount. By giving, even to persons of the *Lowest* Abilities, clearer Instructions concerning the *Nature* and *Perfections* of God, than were usually attained even by the most *Learned Philosophers* amidst the dark Superstitions of the *Pagan World*. By showing to all men, that God is a Being of *purer Eyes than to behold iniquity*; So far *hating Wickedness*, as that he did not think fit to pardon Sin without so great a Testimony against it as the Death of his Son; And yet, at the same time, of such essential *Mercy and Goodness*, that he would rather give his own Son a Ransom for Sinners, than not find a method of pardoning them, consistent with the Wisdom of his infinite and eternal Government. By giving us consequently the *Example* of *Christ*, in his Life, and in his Sufferings; the *Assistances* of his Spirit; the Assurance of a *Reward for Virtue*, in a happy immortality; and a more express declaration of his *Wrath from Heaven*, against all *Unrighteousness and Ungodliness of men*. By *These Means* does the Gospel in the most effectual manner *Teach us*, that denying *Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, we should live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*. And to *Them* who are thus taught by it, and to *Them only*, it is the *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*. 'Tis unto *Them*, as the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it, the *Savour of Life unto Life*; but unto the Wicked, the *Savour of Death unto Death*.

SERMON XIII.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th verse.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling ; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

THERE is no one Question in the whole System of Divinity, which has raised greater Controversies in the Church of God, than That concerning the Extent of the *Grace of God* and the *Power of Man*. Some, in order to vindicate God from being the Author of Sin, have been so solicitous to maintain the perfect Freedom of *Men's* Faculties, and their Liberty of choosing Good or Evil ; that they either *have*, or have been thought *to have*, diminished from the absoluteness of the Sovereignty, or from the Efficacy of the *Grace of God*. They have been *thought*, I say, to diminish from the *Grace of God*. For whether they have *really* done so, or only by their Adversaries been *represented* as doing so ; is not very evident. In almost *all* Controversies, what Men say for *Themselves*,

selves, and what their *Adversaries* infer or represent them as saying, are generally two very different things: And they who will not be at the pains to consider distinctly what *each* side alledges for *itself*, but will judge of *Either* by the character or representation made of it by the *Other* only; will for ever be led into erroneous judgments concerning Men and Things, and continue unavoidably ignorant of the True State of the Matter in Question, whatsoever it be. Whether therefore They who in Antient Times were represented as *Deniers* of the *Grace of God*, were rightly charged with so doing or no, does not certainly appear; because the *Ground* of that charge, was only their asserting the *Freedom of the Will of Man*; which though their *Adversaries* judged to infer a Denial of the Sufficiency of the Power or Grace of God, yet perhaps *They Themselves* saw no such consequence of it. However That be; *Others*, in the contrary Extreme, that they might be sure not to ascribe too little to the Efficacy of the Divine Grace, have supposed men to have *no natural Powers at all of Acting or Willing, no Use of the original Faculties given them at their Creation, no Liberty of Will or Freedom of Choice*, in matters of Morality and Religion. By which Doctrine they have *consequently*, (even themselves *seeing and acknowledging* the consequence,) introduced an absolute *Necessity or Fatality* upon Men's Actions. From whence it follows, in the next step of deduction, (though This indeed they are not so willing to see;) but in Truth it *does necessarily and unavoidably follow*; that *God himself*, and not *Man*, will be the Author of Sin.

SOMETHING not unlike This, has happened in another Question concerning the *Liberty of the Will of Man*, and the *Prescience or Foreknowledge of God*.

Some,

Some, considering that without Liberty of the Will, there can be no Religion, no Virtue or Vice, no just Punishment or reasonable Reward ; have, in order to remove an Objection which they judged would otherwise lie hard against so important a Truth, *denied* or seemed to *deny* God's foreknowledge of future and free Events. *Others* on the contrary, intent upon magnifying the Glory of the Divine Attributes, and solicitous to secure the including all possible future Events within the Compass of God's Foreknowledge, have affirmed all the Actions of Men to be Necessary and Determined absolutely, by a Chain of certain and unalterable Causes. The Consequence of which unavoidably is, that Man in reality is no more capable of Morality or Religion, than a Beast that perishes, or than a lifeless Machine.

THE *Truth*, in *Both* these controversies, is ; that there is Something in *Each* part of the Question, which must needs be acknowledged to be True ; and yet 'tis equally necessary that it *be always so only* acknowledged, and *so only* understood, as to be consistent with what on the *Other* part of the Question must at the same Time, and for the same Reasons, of Necessity be acknowledged too. For otherwise, we do but endeavour to establish *One* Truth, at the Expense of *Another* ; which, at the conclusion of the Argument, is not indeed confirming *Either* of them, but destroying *Both*. Thus, for instance, the *Freedom of Men's Will*, whatever be the Nature and the Degree of that Freedom, must upon no account be any thing in any wise inconsistent with any of the *Perfections of God* ; because the Attributes of the Divine Nature are *Necessary* in themselves, absolutely and unalterably, and antecedent to the Production of all created Beings. And on the other side, *no Attribute of the Divine Nature*, such

as *Foreknowledge* in particular, can possibly be such as to take away the *Liberty of the Will of Man*; because then it would consequently destroy some of the Other equally necessary Perfections of God, such as Justice and Goodness which cannot possibly be destroyed. Since therefore neither the *Foreknowledge of God*, nor the *Liberty of Man*, can without a plain contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the *Foreknowledge of God* must be of *such a Nature*, as is not inconsistent with the *Liberty of Man*. That is to say; it cannot be a Knowledge of the same sort or Species, as is the Knowledge of necessary and determined Events, arising from a View of the whole Chain or Series of Necessary Causes producing those Events: but it must be a Knowledge, quite of another Nature; a Power, difficult indeed for Us to frame a *clear* conception of, but yet not impossible to have a Notion of in general. For as a *Man* who has no influence over Another person's Actions, can yet often perceive beforehand what That Other will do; and a *wiser* and more experienced Man, will still with greater *probability* foresee what Another, whose Disposition he is perfectly acquainted with, will in certain Circumstances do; and an *Angel*, with still much less *degrees of Error*, may have a farther Prospect into Men's future Actions: so 'tis very reasonable to apprehend, that *God*, without influencing Men's Wills by his Power, yet by his Foresight cannot but have as much *Certainer* a Knowledge of future Free Events, than either Men or Angels can possibly have, as the *Perfection* of *His* nature is greater than that of *Theirs*.

IN like manner, in that *Other* question, which is the Subject-matter of my Text: Whatever Power Men be supposed to have in the Use of their *natural Faculties*,

Faculties, 'tis evident it cannot be such as in any wise to diminish the Sense they ought to have of their continual *Dependance* upon God; because those *very* Powers and *natural* Faculties, are *themselves* entirely the Gift of God, and not any thing at all of *our own* procuring, as of *our selves*. So that those who have been charged with ascribing *the most* to the Power of Men's own Wills, did not perhaps (as their *Adversaries* conceived) intend to derogate any thing from Men's true *Dependance* upon God: For it cannot be imagined that any reasonable Men should contend, (neither did their Argument require it,) that any One should in any Action, or in any Degree, be Independent on his Maker. On the other side; whatever be supposed to be the Power and Efficacy of the *Grace of God*, even where it has the most *effectual* Influence; yet it must upon no account be understood to be such as to over-rule the Liberty of Men's Will and Choice, and render their Actions *necessary*; because This would be to remove the whole Foundation of Religion, by entirely destroying the Morality of Men's Actions, and taking away the very Nature of Virtue and Vice. Since therefore neither the Influence of the *Divine Grace*, nor the proper *Power of Men* in the use of their *natural* Faculties, can without an evident contradiction be denied; it follows unavoidably, that the *Grace of God* must of necessity always be understood, to have the nature of a *moral Assistance only*, which does perfectly agree with Men's *Free use of their Faculties*; and that it is *not* in the nature of a *physical compulsion*, which is altogether inconsistent with Men's doing any thing *themselves*. The Apostle perfectly expresses this whole Notion, in the Words of the Text: *Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; for it is God that worketh*

in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. He does not say, Work out your own Salvation yourselves, as having no Need of the Grace of God: Neither does he say on the contrary, The Grace of God worketh All in you, and therefore ye need not to do any thing yourselves: But, ascribing to each part its proper Office, he says, Work ye out your own Salvation, because the Grace of God (the Motives and Assistances of the Gospel) gives you Power so to do.

THE principal Argument alleged by Those, who think the Influence of the Divine Grace to be so efficacious as to *necessitate* Men's Actions, is, that it seems to Them *unworthy* of the Supreme Power, Sovereignty and Majesty of God to do any thing *ineffectually*, or to permit Any Act of His to be *resisted and frustrated* by the Power of frail and mortal Men. And, were the Power of God the matter in question, This Argument would indeed be undoubtedly good. But in *Moral* matters, where whatever is not done *voluntarily and without Compulsion*, is not done *at all*; the case is very different. For in *these* matters, to influence a Moral Agent with such an Efficacy as *cannot be resisted*, is entirely to destroy the Morality of the Action, to take away the whole Nature of Virtue and Vice, and to make all Reward or Punishment impossible or unjust. So far therefore is it from being *unworthy* of God, to *forbear* exerting his irresistible Power in *these* Cases; that, on the contrary, it would be altogether *unworthy* of him to *exercise* That Power; because it would be a subverting of his whole Design, in creating rational and intelligent Beings at all. *Moral Agents*, must be influenced only by *Moral Motives*; by Reason and Argument, by Persuasion and Conviction, by Hopes and Fears. The *Efficacy* therefore of the Grace of
God

God, can consist only in laying before men *strong Arguments* for their *Conviction*, and giving them sufficient *Helps* and *Assistances* to overcome whatever would hinder them from acting according to such conviction. Any other influence than what is of this *moral* nature; any Influence that amounted to *Force*, and could not be resisted; far from being truly *efficacious* to make Men *good and virtuous*, would on the contrary make it as *impossible* for them to have any *Virtue* or *Goodness* at all, as it is that a *Clock* or a *Watch* should be virtuous and praise-worthy.

THE Summ is This: In order to give God his due Honour and Glory, and to keep up in Men's Minds a just Sense of their continual Dependence upon him; 'tis necessary that we at all times acknowledge, that all our Powers and *natural* Faculties *themselves* are entirely at first *derived* to us from God's free Goodness, and continually *preserved* to us merely by the same good pleasure; and that neither our *Being*, nor any *Power* we have, is in any wise owing to Ourselves: That, much more, every *supernatural* Sufficiency, every *extraordinary* Degree of Assistance, every *revealed* Means of Knowledge, every *New* Motive to Virtue or Determent from Vice, every *Direction* or *Guidance* in the way of *Life* which we receive from the Knowledge of things *invisible*, and from the kind Influence of the *Divine Spirit*; is wholly the *Gift* or *Grace* of God: That the *Promise* of *Heaven* and of *eternal Happiness* at all, as the Reward of our best *Endeavours* and most perfect *Services*, if such were *possible* to be performed by us; that even *This* also is merely God's free *Bounty*, and *undeserved Gift*, to unprofitable Servants: All This, I say, is of necessity to be acknowledged, in order to give God his due Honour and just Glory.

AT the same time, that the *Nature of Virtue and Vice* may not be taken away; 'tis also of no less necessity to be acknowledged, that as the natural *Faculties* wherewith God hath originally endowed Men, are in their own Power either to *make use of* or to *neglect*; so the supernatural *Assistances* afforded Men by the Revelation of the Gospel, and by the Influence of the Divine Grace, are still *but* in the Nature of *Assistances*, which may either be *complied with* or *rejected*: And the Gift of eternal Life, as 'tis the *free* Gift of God, which Men could not possibly deserve, or claim, by virtue of any Work or Duty which they were capable of performing; so it is *not* a forced Gift, imposed upon them whether they will or no; but *such* a free Gift, as requires the *concurrence* of their own *Endeavours*, in *applying* and *making Use of* the Divine Assistance which inables them to obtain it. For this reason, the Apostle St Peter exhorts men to *grow in Grace*, as a Duty depending upon their own *Endeavours*, 2 Pet. iii. 18; and St Paul admonishes Men, *not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit of God*, who *will not* forcibly *drive* with Those which resist his good Motions; And Men are frequently blamed in Scripture for *receiving the Grace of God in vain*; for *resisting the Holy Ghost*, and for *rejecting the Counsel of God against themselves*.

THE Cause of erroneous Opinions, in This and most other questions about which there have at any time been raised any controversies, is generally This; that Men attending to *One* point only, and being solicitous to oppose strongly some *particular* Error, have been apt to do it in such a manner, as has carried them out beyond the Truth of the Argument, and prevented them from guarding against being exposed to Error in some contrary Extreme. Thus in disputing against the Er-

sours of the Church of Rome, incautious persons have frequently been betrayed by an unwise Zeal to make use of such Arguments, as they were not aware might at the same time be alleged by Others of an opposite Perswasion, with the same Force against themselves. And nothing is more common, than for Others on the contrary, in the heat of Controversy with some of their Brethren who differ from them, to draw such Arguments from Church-Authority, and General Councils, and the like ; as they are not enough sensible may on any other occasion be used against Themselves by Those of the Church of Rome, with at least as Great and perhaps Greater Force. Thus in like manner in the present case ; If Any persons, solicitous to maintain the Liberty of Man's Will, have at any time asserted such a Power in Men's Use of their natural Faculties, as to make them *not dependent* upon God ; or such as may of *Right* claim the Reward of Heaven, and not of *Free Grace* and *undeserved Promise* ; These indeed, (if any Such have been, and they have not rather been *mistaken* by their Adversaries,) These, I say, *going about to establish* their own *righteousness*, (in the Sense St Paul blames, Rom, x. 3.) and *not submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God*, have indeed *frustrated the Grace of God*, (as the same Apostle speaks again, Gal. ii. 21 ;) *For if righteousness comes by This way, then undoubtedly Christ is dead in vain*. But then Others on the *contrary part*, solicitous (as they conceived) to maintain God's absolute Sovereignty in all things, and the Efficacy of Divine Grace ; to magnify the work of God in Men, and to depress and humble the Vanity of Those who assume Any thing to themselves as *of themselves* ; have almost perpetually urged such Arguments against their Adversaries, as they

were not aware might by the Enemies of all Religion, the Asserters of Necessity and Fate, be with equal Strength alleged against *Themselves*. And by *exalting* (as They thought) the Grace of God into an *irresistible Efficacy*, they have consequently made it, in truth and reality, to be of *No Efficacy at all*. For, in matters of morality and religion, That *only* is of any Effect, which makes men, in the *moral* sense, *better* than they would otherwise be: And then *only* are they morally *Better*, when by *moral* Motives, by conviction of *Truth* and *Reason*, by well grounded *Hopes* and just *Fears*, they are perswaded and prevailed upon to love and to chuse freely what is *Right* and *Good*. If by any *irresistible* Influence they are *compelled* to do it, the best Action in the World has no longer any Goodness in it; being not done by *Them*, any more than by any *material* or *unintelligent Instrument*, to which no man ever ascribes either *Good* or *Evil*. The *Truth* therefore is plainly This: If we will frame to ourselves right Notions of Religion, Notions which truly tend to the Glory of *God*, and to promote Virtue and Obedience in *Men*; the *Power* ascribed to *Men*, must neither on the one side be supposed to be such, that thereby men can *Merit* any thing, as of *themselves*; neither on the other side must the Influence of the *Power* or *Grace* of *God* be imagined to be such, as will make vain and needless our own Endeavours. But the *Grace* of *God*, manifested in the *merciful Terms* of the Gospel, in the *clear Revelation* of a Future State, and of a Judgment to come, in *God's* declared Acceptance of Repentance through *Christ*, and in the promised Assistance of the *Holy Spirit*; This *Grace* of *God*, I say, effectually enables men to perform their Duty. And the *Power* and *Will* of *Man*, applying and making Use of that Assistance

Assistance to an actual Improvement in Virtue, brings forth on *its* part, those acceptable Fruits of the Spirit, which wicked men are *therefore* justly condemned for not bringing forth, because *They also* had the means of Grace offered and proposed to them, but wilfully and obstinately refused to be amended thereby. God hath, of his good pleasure, or of his free Grace, given them both to will and to do; and yet, through their own perverseness and obstinate disobedience, they work not out their own Salvation.

WHEN therefore the Scripture tells us that *by Grace we are saved*, and yet that at the same time we *work out our own Salvation*; 'tis plain that these different Phrases are only different representations of one and the same thing, under different respects: Just as Height and Depth are one and the same thing, considered only in different Positions. Men are saved by Grace, because without God's gracious Assistance and Acceptance of their imperfect Endeavours, they could not of themselves attain unto Salvation; and at the same time 'tis no less true, that they *work out their own Salvation*, because without their leading a Life of Virtue and Obedience through a diligent Use of those means which the Grace of God affords them, the Grace of God alone will in no wise force them to be saved. Thus *God's working in or with Us*, and *our working together with God*, are promiscuously expressed in Scripture, as Causes concurrently producing the same Effect. And mens being *hardened*, or *wicked*; *hardened of God*, or *hardening themselves*, are phrases used in like manner to signify one and the same thing under different Respects. They *harden themselves*; because 'tis by their own Obstinacy and Perverseness only, that they become obdurate. And they are *hardened of God*, not by any proper

proper Act or Efficiency of his, (except perhaps in some extraordinary judicial Cases;) but by his justly ceasing to strive with them any longer, giving them up unto *their own hearts lusts*, (as the Scripture expresses it,) *letting them follow their own imaginations*, and giving them over to a *reprobate mind*, to work all unrighteousness with greediness. Lastly; 'Tis very remarkable to This purpose, that the very same Acts and Habits, which are known by the Name of *Moral Virtues*, are also in Scripture stiled *Graces* or *Gifts of the Spirit*: *Moral Virtues*, as they are seated in the Mind of Man, directing his Intentions, and appearing in his Practise: And, at the same time, *Gifts or Fruits of the Spirit*; as they are promoted by the *Arguments of revealed Religion*, by the *Assistance of the Spirit of God*, and by being practised in express Obedience to the Divine Commands. The Fruit of the Spirit, (saith St Paul, Eph. v. 9.) is in all Goodness and Righteousness and Truth. And Gal. v. 22. The Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance; against Such, there is No Law.

AND NOW, having premised a large explication of the general Doctrine, upon which the exhortation in the Text is founded; I should in the next place have proceeded to consider distinctly, the several particular expressions made use of in the Text: *What* is meant, by *working out our Salvation*; *what* it is, to work it out with Fear and Trembling; and *why*, in That manner: *What* is meant by God's giving us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure; and *how* This consideration is a Motive to Us, to endeavour to work out our own Salvation. But the distinct Consideration of These particulars, must be referred to a following opportunity.

S E R M O N

SERMON XIV.

Of the GRACE of GOD.

PHIL. ii. latter part of the 12th, and the 13th verse.

Work out your own Salvation with Fear and Trembling ; For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

IN a foregoing Discourse upon these words, I premised a large Explication of the general Doctrine, upon which the Exhortation in the Text is founded. I shall now proceed to consider *disjunctly*, the several particular Expressions made use of in the Text: *What* is meant by *working out our Salvation* ; *what* it is, to work it out *with Fear and Trembling* ; and *why*, in That manner ; *what* is meant by God's *working in us both to will and to do, of his good pleasure* ; and *How This* consideration is a Motive to *Us*, to endeavour to *work out our own Salvation*.

I. IN the *first* place I am to consider *what* is meant, by *working out our Salvation*. The word *Salvation*, originally and in its general Notion, signifies *Deliverance* from any great and imminent Danger ; especially
such

such Deliverance or Escape, as is accomplished not without labour and hazard. And from hence it comes in Scripture to be applied in the *Spiritual* sense, to signify particularly and by way of eminence, the *Great and Final Deliverance* of virtuous and good men from that general Destruction, which, in the nature of Things, and by the righteous appointment of God, must at last overwhelm a wicked and incorrigible world. *The whole World*, saith St. *John*, *lieth in Wickedness*, or, as the Original has it, *under the Power of the wicked One*, 1 ep. v. 19. that is, The greater part of Mankind, through their easiness in yielding to the Temptations of Unrighteousness, their negligence in not correcting the Corruptions of their Nature, and their Perverseness in chusing wilfully the Ways of Wickedness and Debauchery ; are altogether incapable of that State of Happiness, which is in Scripture stiled *The Kingdom of God*. For, what St. *Paul* affirms in the literal Sense, that *Flesh and Blood*, mortal and corruptible Bodies, cannot inherit the Kingdom of God ; is in the spiritual Sense still more necessarily true, that wicked and corrupt Minds shall in no case enter therein. *The new Heavens and new Earth*, which we look for according to his Promise, are such wherein dwellleth only Righteousness ; that is, Meekness and Justice, Purity and Holiness, Faithfulness and Truth. And therefore our Saviour, speaking of the resurrection of the Saints unto eternal Life, elegantly stiles it *The Resurrection of the Just*, Luke xiv. 14. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; and therefore into the heavenly Jerusalem there shall in no wise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a Lie: There shall be admitted no Fraud or Violence, no Arbitrariness or Injustice, no

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Debauchery or Impurity whatsoever ; but *the Spirits of Just men only, made perfect by the Practise of Virtue,* and by the influences of the good Spirit of God. Now the Bulk of the wicked and corrupt World, being (in the nature of Things) incapable of inheriting This Kingdom of Righteousness, must of necessity, not by any Cruel and Severe Decree of God, but of necessity in point of Wisdom and Good Government, they must be excluded out of Heaven, and, by the righteous and impartial Sentence of the unerring Judge, be in such a manner, as shall be exactly suitable to each of their respective Demerits, sent into Destruction. From which Destruction, *They who* (as our Lord expresses it,) *shall be thought worthy to obtain That Life, and the Resurrection from the Dead,* shall be Saved. Not that all Others also shall not equally rise from the Dead ; but that *That only* deserves to be truly and emphatically styled the *Resurrection from the Dead*, which is a *Resurrection unto Life and Glory*. This Deliverance therefore of all just and good men, by the Mercy of God, and through the Interposition of Christ, from that final Destruction, which must naturally and of necessity, under the Government of a Wise and Righteous Judge, fall upon a wicked and corrupt World ; this, I say, is what the Scripture calls *Salvation*. The Consequence of which Salvation is indeed moreover mens being admitted into *That incorruptible Inheritance*, that unspeakable and never-fading *Happiness*, which is the Free Gift of God through Christ, to Those whom in his unerring Judgment he shall think fit to advance beyond their natural and original capacities, to be *Heirs of God and Joint-Heirs with Christ*, in his eternal Kingdom of Glory.

BUT the Primary Notion of *Salvation*, according to the proper signification of the word, is *Deliverance from Destruction*. And the *Greatness* of this Deliverance is, in the *New Testament*, lively represented unto us by several remarkable Types. 'Tis represented *first*, by the Salvation of *Lot* out of *Sodom*; when God with Fire from Heaven overthrew those wicked Cities, *setting them forth for an example*, having destroyed them with an irreparable Destruction, which St. *Jude* calls *the Vengeance of eternal Fire*, ver. 7. 'Tis represented in the next place, by the Salvation of the *children of Israel* out of *Egypt*; when God overthrew *Pharaoh* and his whole Army in the Sea, but led his own people safely, through the Sea and through the Wilderness, into the promised *Canaan*. 'Tis represented again, by the Salvation of those who escaped at the final destruction of *Jerusalem*; concerning which our Saviour foretold, *Matt. xxiv. 40.* that *then should two men be together in the field; the one should be taken, and the other left; And that two women should be grinding together at the mill; the one should be taken, and the other left.* Lastly, 'Tis represented by the Salvation of *Noah* and his Family in the Ark; when God destroyed at once the whole impenitent World, with a Deluge of Water. For so St. *Peter* expressly applies the similitude, 1 ep. iii. 20. *The like figure whereunto, even Baptism* (saith he) *doth also Now save Us.* Only, lest by *Baptism* any man should be so weak as to think he meant the bare outward Form or Ceremony, the mere Name or Profession of a Christian; he adds in the very same verse this most important caution, that thereby he understands, *not the putting away of the Filth of the Flesh, (not the mere Washing or the Ceremony of Baptism,) but*

the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, in the course of a virtuous and a Christian Life.

Now This being the true Notion of the word *Salvation*, the Duty of working out *this Salvation*, which is what we are so earnestly exhorted to in the Text, must consequently signify the making use of those *Means* which are proper and sufficient to obtain This *End*: That is, it must signify the *whole Progress* of our Deliverance, by a Life of *Virtue* and true Religion, from the *Power and Tyranny of the Devil*, from the *Dominion and Slavery of Sin*, and from the *Punishment of Death*.

Men in the State of Heathen ignorance and wickedness, being as it were habitually subject to a Spirit of Delusion, of Impiety, and of all kinds of Debauchery, are in Scripture represented as being in *Slavery to Satan*; who is therefore stiled the *Prince of This World*, and the *God of This World*, the *Prince of the Power of the Air*, the *Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*. From This Tyranny of the Devil men are saved, by forsaking the *Idolatry of the Nations*, and returning to the *worship of the true God of the Universe*, as taught in the *Gospel of Christ*: Being delivered, as St. Paul expresses it, *from the Power of Darkness*, and translated into the *Kingdom of God's dear Son*, Col. i. 13.

LIKEWISE those, who having embraced the *Gospel of Christ*, yet live unworthy of their Holy Profession, by means of *Any Habit of Unrighteousness, or Debauchery*; are represented in Scripture, as being *Slaves to Sin*, and still in the *Snare of the Devil*. The expressions of This kind, are very frequent and elegant; that such persons, are *Servants of Sin*; that *Sin has the Dominion over them*; that they are *overcome by it*;

and brought in bondage to it ; that they are the *Servants of Corruption*, and the like. And because the Devil is the *Head* of this Corruption, who *Tempt*s men into it, and *delights* in it ; therefore, whosoever lives in Sin, notwithstanding his professing himself a *Disciple of Christ*, is still in reality the *Servant of Satan* : 1 John iii. 8. *He that committeth Sin is of the Devil ; for the Devil sinneth from the Beginning.* Whosoever is so false to himself, as not to be able to resist the *Temptations of Unrighteousness*, imitates, and is subject to, the *Great Enemy of God and Goodness* ; is in the *Snare of the Devil*, and taken captive by him at his *Will*. Now the Design of Christ's coming into the World was to *destroy these works of the Devil* ; to save men from their Sins, Matt. i. 21. to *persuade* them, and to *enable* them, to save themselves from amongst a wicked and corrupt generation ; to *deliver them from the bondage of corruption into the glorious Liberty of the children of God.* Working out our own Salvation therefore, (considered as an exhortation given to such as are already Christians,) signifies *making a diligent Use of the Means and Encouragements which God has afforded us in the Gospel, to assist and enable us effectually to reform every evil Habit, and to improve in the Practice of every Virtue, perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* The Consequence of which Salvation from Sin, is *Salvation also from the Punishment which God has denounced against Sinners.* And not only so, but upon them who shall be thought worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man, shall be conferred moreover God's free Gift of *Eternal Life and Happiness.*

THE Exhortation therefore in the Text, to *work out our own Salvation*, is of the same import with That
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of St. Peter, 2 ep. i. 10. Brethren, give diligence to make your Calling and Election sure ; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall : for so an Entrance shall be ministred unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. From which Admonition of St. Peter, compared with This in the Text, it follows plainly and undeniably, that Men (by God's Assistance) have a Power, as well as an Obligation, to work out their own Salvation ; and that their election, that is, their being chosen and approved of God, depends upon That diligence and sincere endeavour of their own, which the Apostle expressly exhorts them to make use of to this purpose, that thereby they may secure their being elected of God.

II. I AM to consider in the second place, what is meant by working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling ; and why it must be done in That manner.

Now the words *Fear and Trembling*, are not put here to express a Passion, but to denote Care and Diligence in our Actions, in opposition to Presumption, Remissness, or negligent Confidence. According to those other Admonitions in Scripture ; be not high-minded, but fear ; and, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. The wise man observes, Prov. xxviii. 14. Happy is the man that feareth, that is, who is cautious, always ; but he that hardeneth his Heart, that is, who is careless and negligent, shall fall into Mischiefe. And, To This man will I look, saith God himself by the Prophet, Is. lxvi. 2. even to Him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word. St. Paul, though so eminent an Apostle, yet speaks thus concerning his own Praefise upon This Head : I keep under my Body, says he, and bring it into subjection,

jection, 1 Cor. ix. 27. lest by any means, when I have preached to Others, I myself should become a cast-away. And Phil. iii. 11. If by any means, says he, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead; Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect;—But this One thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the Mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

THE Reasons why we are exhorted to work out our Salvation after this manner, with Fear and Trembling; that is, with Caution and Diligence, with Care and Earnest Application; are,

1st, BECAUSE 'tis of all others the thing of the greatest importance to us. 'Tis the One thing necessary; the Preservation of ourselves, of our Souls, of our Life, of our Happiness for ever. What Naaman's Servant said to his Master upon another occasion, is much more applicable here; My Father, if he had bid thee do some Great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, wash and be clean? Skin for Skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his Life; for the preservation of this short, this transitory life: What then shall he give in Exchange for his Soul, in Exchange for his portion in Eternity? If therefore no wise Man, according to our Saviour's Argument in the Parable, attempts to build a Tower, without first sitting down and counting the Cost of it; how much more does it behove every reasonable person, to be solicitous before all things, that he be well assured in his own Understanding, and not by mere hap-hazard rely blindly upon Others, in order to find which is the True Way of Salvation; and that he be accordingly diligent, in walking in That Way!

2^{dly},

2dly, ANOTHER reason why we are required to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is because of the *Difficulties* we must expect to meet with in the Work. *Difficulties*, not in the Nature of the *thing itself*: For Christ's Yoke is *easy*, and his Burden *light*. *Virtue* is of all things *the most natural and the most reasonable*; and the *Commandments of God*, in themselves *no way grievous*. But *great Difficulties* often arise, by the perverse opposition of *wicked men from without*, and the corrupt inclination of *unreasonable and ungoverned Appetites from within*. Inasmuch that even *the righteous*, saith St. Peter, *scarcely are saved*: And St. Paul speaks of Men being *saved, so as by fire*; that is, escaping with difficulty, as out of a house which is in Flames: *saved with Fear, pulled out of the Fire*, so St. Jude expresses it, *ver. 23*. The *Flesh* lusteth against the Spirit; warring against the reason and law of our Minds; so that we cannot, without some Pains and Care, do the things that are most reasonable. And when we have perfectly conquered *ourselves*; yet still, through the *Difficulties* brought upon us by *Others*, by the *Profane Persecutor*, or the *Superstitious Bigot*; by the *Blenders of humane Authority with Divine*; and those who mingle and confound together the *Powers of This World and the Doctrines of Men*, with the *Commands of God*; by These is the *Gate* often made *strait*, and the *Way narrow*, so that through *tribulation* only can we possibly *enter into the Kingdom of God*.

3dly, A *third* reason, why we are directed to work out our Salvation *with Fear*, is, because it is a *Work* that can be done but *Once*; and if we *Once miscarry*, we have lost ourselves for ever. *It is appointed for Men Once to die, and after That, the Judgment*: And *when Once the master of the House is risen up and bath*

shut to the door, there is no more Admission. This Argument is represented to us under a very elegant Similitude by one of the most antient Writers next to the Apostles times: As a Potter, says he, while the Clay is moist and soft, moulds it over and over again, if it pleases him not at first; but after it has been once hardened in the Fire, its shape can be mended no more: So in the present life, God affords Men from time to time Space and Means of Repentance; but after Death and Judgment has once passed upon them, and they be cast into the Fire, there is no more Remedy for ever.

4thly, We are exhorted to work out our Salvation with Fear, and to be perpetually upon our guard, because we are continually in danger of New Temptations, and at no time secure from their Assaults. Temptations of one sort or other, perpetually surround us; and the Negligent, or Presumptuous, cannot fail of being frequently betrayed into Sin. From hence are those repeated Admonitions of our Saviour and his Apostles, to watch and to be ready always, to stand fast in the Faith, to quit ourselves like men, to be strong, to be sober and vigilant, to take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief; and to exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it.

Lastly, ANOTHER reason why we are required to work out our Salvation with Fear, is, because whatever progress in Virtue we have already made, yet if hereafter we fall back into unrighteous Practices, we lose our reward. The Just, saith God, shall live by Faith; but if any Man draws back, my Soul shall have no pleasure in him: For no Man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God.

God. As in a *Race*, All run, but he only that perseveres, obtains the Prize ; and in a *warfare*, All fight, but he only that overcomes gains the Crown of Victory ; so, in the *spiritual Combat*, *he that endures to the End*, saith our Lord, *the same shall be saved*. For to them who by *patient Continuance* in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, to *Them* only is made the Promise of eternal Life. Wherefore, as *St. Paul* admonishes, *we ought to give the more earnest Heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip*, Heb. ii. 1.

III. THE Third thing I proposed to consider in the Text, was, *what is meant by God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*. Now the plain and full meaning of This, is ;

1st, THAT God is to us the only *Author* of all those *Powers and Faculties*, which we vulgarly call *Natural*. In Him we Live, Move, and have our Being. From Him we are indued with Reason and Understanding, with the Faculty of discerning between Good and Evil, with the Power of Willing and Choosing what is Right. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our Sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Weak therefore is That distinction so often found in the Writings of Divines, between *Nature* and *Grace* ; as if One was not equally the Gift of God, as the Other.

2^{dly}, God's giving us *both to will and to do*, signifies his affording us moreover *Supernatural Helps*. Such is, the *Revelation of the Gospel* ; which is therefore frequently in Scripture called, *The Grace of God* ; Tit. ii. 11. *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all men*. (Col. i. 6.)

UNDER

UNDER which general Grace, are included more particularly, the following Supernatural Helps. A clear and distinct Knowledge of our Duty, more distinct than could be discovered by the Light of Nature alone. A more plain and express bringing of Life and Immortality to Light, by the particular Revelation of a judgment to come. Exceeding Great and precious Promises; by the Faith and expectation of which, we are enabled to overcome the World, to quench all the fiery darts of the Devil, and to become partakers of the Divine Nature by perfecting righteousness and true Holiness. An Assurance of the Forgiveness of past Sins upon Repentance; which is what the Scripture emphatically calls Grace; The Law came by Moses, but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. The Assistance of the Divine Spirit in the constant and ordinary practice of our Duty; by which we are renewed, justified, sanctified, and have the Love of God shed abroad in our Hearts. Not that the Spirit of God acts upon us by way of necessary compulsion, forcibly and irresistibly; (for the exhortations given us, not to quench and grieve and drive him from us, evidently show the contrary;) But he helps our Infirmities, in the way of Moral Assistance, Persuasion, Direction and Concurrence; but will not always strive with men who obstinately resist his good Motions. *Wisd. i. 4.* Into a malicious Soul Wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto Sin; For the Holy Spirit of Discipline will flee deceit, and remove from Thoughts that are without Understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in.

Lastly, UNDER Extraordinary Trials, the Gospel assures us of still more particular and extraordinary Supports: that God will never leave us, nor forsake

us,

us, but will with the Temptation always make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it; and particularly, that in time of great Persecution, it shall be given us in that same Hour what we shall speak and what we shall do.

THESE are, over and above our natural Powers and Faculties, the Supernatural Helps and Assistances afforded us by the Gospel: Both of which are included in the Assertion in the Text, that 'tis God which worketh in us both to will and to do.

THE last words added in the Text, *ὡς τῆς ἐὸν δυνάμεως*, of his good pleasure, do not signify, as Some have imagined, that God works all these things arbitrarily, without any regard to the Dispositions and Qualifications of Men. But the True meaning of the words is, that he does all these things through his Goodness; That is the Sense of the word which we render good pleasure. 'Tis God's Goodness which moves him to work in us both to will and to do; to give us both the Faculties of Nature, and the Supernatural Assistances of the Gospel, to lead us unto Life and Happiness.

IV. THE Fourth and Last thing I proposed from the Text, was, to show How This consideration of God's working in us both to will and to do, is an Argument or Motive to Us to work out our own Salvation. Work out your own Salvation, For it is God that worketh in you both to Will and to Do of his good pleasure. The Meaning plainly is; not, that God does All for us; For then the Contrary consequence must needs have been true, that we could do nothing for ourselves; But God, of his great Goodness gives us Power; therefore We may and ought to Act. And we may depend also, that if we be sincere in the Use of the Powers he has given us, our Endeavours shall not

be in vain. For, *Greater is He that is in Us, than He that is in the World*; and if God be for us, who can be against Us? The Exhortation therefore in the Text, is of the same Import with that in Eph. vi. 10. Finally, my Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his might.

THE Inferences proper to be drawn from the whole of what has been said, are:

1. FROM hence we may observe, how little Foundation there is in Scripture for those Men's Opinion, who understanding figurative Expressions literally and absurdly, contend that wicked Men have no Power to do any thing towards their own Conversion; and consequently ascribe the Cause of Men's Impenitency, to God's not giving them (as they call it) the *Grace to repent*. Which is a very great Abuse of a Scripture-expression. For, God's giving or granting Men Repentance, signifies (in Scripture) his granting them the Favour to have their Repentance accepted to the Forgiveness of past Sins, or allowed instead of Innocence; and not his conferring Repentance upon them, as an external Donation; Which is altogether unintelligible. Nor is it less absurd, from those passages where very bad Men are said to be dead in trespasses and sins; and that when they amend, God creates in them a new Heart; to conclude literally, that wicked Men have no more Power to amend their manners than to raise themselves from the dead, or to create themselves anew. Which Doctrine, must of necessity make Men very slothful Servants.

2dly, THE second Use proper to be made of the explication now given of the words of the Text, is to Exhort Men to be diligent in working out their own Salvation by the Use of those Means which God has worked

worked or implanted in them. Which exhortation cannot be better expressed, than in the words of the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, ch. i. 12. *Seek not Death in the Errour of your life ; and pull not upon yourselves destruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not Death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction of the living. But ungodly Men with their works and words called it unto them. And Ecclus. xv. 11. Say not thou, the Lord has caused me to err ; for he hath no need of the sinful man. The Lord hateth all abomination ; and they that fear God, love it not. He himself made Men from the beginning, and left them in the hands of his counsel ; if thou wilt, to keep the Commandments, and to perform acceptable Faithfulness. He hath set fire and water before thee ; stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt. Before man is Life and Death ; and whether him liketh shall be given him. For the Wisdom of the Lord is great ; and he is mighty in Power, and beholdeth all things. And his Eyes are upon them that fear him, and he knoweth every work of Man. He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither has he given any man licence to sin.*

S E R M O N

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SERMON XV.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

MATT. VI. 10.

Thy Kingdom come.

THOUGH every Christian acknowledges this Prayer of our Lord's composing, to be a complete Pattern and Direction, as to the *Subject-matter* of the things we are to pray for; yet Many, very Many, 'tis to be feared, perpetually repeat the *Words*, with very little Attention to the *Sense* expressed by them: Not considering, that All Devotion consists entirely in the Application of the *Mind* to God, with an *Understanding* of what it desires; and not at all in the mere repeating with the *Lips* certain customary *Forms of Words*.

OUR Lord in the *former* part of this Prayer, after having taught us that the True and Proper Object of Worship, to whom our Petitions ought constantly (through *His* Mediation) to be directed, is *the Father which is in Heaven*; (that is, *the Most High*; he who, not in *Place or Situation*, but in *Dignity and Dominion*, is *Supreme over All*;) Our Lord, I say, in the *former* part of this Prayer, after directing us to the True Object of Worship, our *Heavenly Father*, instructs us to

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pray

pray in the *first* place, for Blessings *spiritual and eternal*; and then, in the *following* part of the Prayer, to ask for the *Comforts and Necessaries* of this *present Life*. In the *former* part, among the Petitions for Blessings of a *Spiritual* nature, and one of the *Principal* of Those Petitions, are the *Words of the Text*: Words of a very large and extensive signification; comprehending in brief, almost the *Whole Notion* of True Religion; and, therefore, *particularly worthy* to be the Subject of our Meditations: *Thy Kingdom come.*

GOD is by Nature King over All; and his Kingdom is the *Universe*. His *Dominion* is infinite and everlasting, his *Power* absolute and irresistible, his *Glory* inexpressible and inconceivable. *Of him, and Through him, and To him, are all things*, Rom. xi. 36. That is, *For his Pleasure*, all things were created; *By his Providence*, all things are preserved; *To his Glory*, all things terminate. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work.* The whole Frame of Nature obeys his Commands; and all the Powers of the Universe depend entirely upon the Word of his Mouth.

BUT because the True Greatness and Dignity of a Governour consists chiefly in the Obedience of them that can *disobey*: Because 'tis more *excellent* to be obeyed by *Reason and Understanding*, by *Will and Choice*, than by mere *necessity of Nature*: Because 'tis more *noble* to govern *Free Agents* by *moral considerations*, by the *Knowledge* of what is intrinsically *Good or Evil*, by a *Sense* of the Excellency of *Truth and Virtue*, by the *Wisdom* of reasonable and useful *Laws*, and by the *Views* of proper *Rewards and Punishments*, than to have *Power* over infinite Systems of *inanimate Matter*, which has no Sense of the Regularity of its own Mo-
tions,

tions, nor capacity to perceive the Wisdom and Glory of its Creator : Therefore the *Kingdom of God* principally consists, in his Government of *reasonable and intelligent* Creatures ; in his being *served and obeyed* by those, who at the same time are capable of *disobeying* ; who by their *own Actions* set forth his Glory, and not merely in their being *Acted upon* by Him ; who in their several Stations and Degrees, according to the Light that is afforded them, *discern* what is *Right*, and *approve* what is *Good*, and *act* by their *Free Power*, and are *conscious* of the Excellency of *Virtue*, and *Love* him whom they Obey, and are made *Happy* by the participation of his Perfections. This is That, wherein principally consists the *Kingdom of God* : A Kingdom, wherein shines forth the *Goodness*, and *Justice*, and *Wisdom*, and *Holiness*, of the Supreme Governor, as clearly as his *Power and Dominion* does in his ruling the whole material Universe.

By *Sin*, This Kingdom of God, This his Government over the *Hearts and Wills* of the rational part of the Creation, is *opposed and withstood*. For his *natural Kingdom*, the Kingdom of his *Power*, cannot be resisted. In *This* respect, the whole World is in his Hand as a Dust of the Ballance ; He can withdraw from all things their very *Being* itself, and, with a Blast of his mouth, whenever he pleases, reduce them all into Nothing in a Moment. So that 'tis a very *absurd* Notion, which some have entertained, from certain figurative expressions of Scripture very much misunderstood ; as if the Devil had attempted to oppose the Almighty with *Force*, and had contended with him for the *Dominion of the Universe*, No : Such representations as These are only the Fictions of Poets : But, indeed, the *Devil rebelled* against God, in the same

Sense wherein *wicked men rebel* against him. Not by thinking to resist his *Power*, but by presumptuously venturing to disobey his *Will*, in those things wherein the Nature of *Virtue and Vice*, and the very Essence of *Moral Government*, necessarily requires that they should not be over-ruled and compelled by *Force*. For here, the Thing that God requires is the *Free Consent of the Will*; which, in the nature of things, is not subject to *Compulsion*; *Obedience itself* being *No obedience*, where there was no possibility of having *disobeyed*. By *Sin* therefore this *Moral Kingdom of God* began to be opposed; by the *Sins of Evil Angels*, and by the *Sins of Wicked men*: Among whom, as they corrupted themselves by degrees, in departing from the *Living God*; the Devil set up a *Kingdom of Idolatry and Great Wickedness*, in opposition to the *Righteous Kingdom of God*. In order to *destroy* which *Works of the Devil*; (to *destroy* them, not by the exercise of *Omnipotence*, but by the establishment of *Virtue and True Religion*, which is the *Proper* and the *Only proper* Destruction of *Immorality and Vice*;) God was pleased to give assistance and strength to the *Light of Nature and Reason*, by making *Revelations* of himself from time to time to the degenerate world, and of the true manner of worshipping him; first by the *Patriarchs*, whom he appointed to be *Preachers of Righteousness* both before and after the *Flood*; and then by *Moses* and the *Prophets*; and at last by his *Own Son*; who came into the *World*, and was *manifested* (as *St John* assures us) for *This Cause*, that he might *destroy the Works of the Devil*; that is, that he might root out *Idolatry and Superstitious Worship*, and reform men from *Debauchery* and all *Unrighteous Practices*; that by the *Knowledge, Worship, and Love* of the

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One True God and Maker of all things, in Purity and Holiness of Life, in Justice, Meekness, and universal Charity and Good-will towards each Other, he might bring them back, from a state of general corruption, to become Worthy and Obedient Subjects of his Father's Kingdom of Righteousness.

FOR This reason, the *State of the Gospel*, the *Religion of Christ*, the *Obedience of Faith*, is in Scripture perpetually stiled the *Kingdom of God*: That Kingdom of God, which we are commanded to *seek*, in the *righteousness thereof*: That Kingdom, which our Saviour told the *Jews*, when he began to preach, was *Then come unto them*: Which he elsewhere declared to the *Pharisees*, *cometh not with observation*; *neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there*; for *behold, the Kingdom of God is within you*: Which, he assured his Disciples, *whosoever did not receive with the Meekness and Inoffensiveness of a little child, should not enter thereinto at all*; and which, he threatens, in case of mens unworthiness, should be *taken from One Nation, and given to Another* that would bring forth the *Fruits thereof*: That Kingdom, which, in his *Parables*, our Lord represents under *various similitudes* of a moral signification; setting forth, by apt and proper Comparisons, its different States in the present World; and out of which, he tells us, shall finally be gathered *All Offences, and they which do iniquity*: That Kingdom, which God Thus described of old to *Moses*, *Exod. xix. 6. Ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and an Holy Nation*: And the Prophet Thus, *Pf. xlv. 6. A Sceptre of Righteousness is the Sceptre of thy Kingdom*: And the heavenly Host in the *Revelation Thus*, *ch. xii. 9, 10. Now is come Salvation and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God*; for *That old Serpent* — which

deceiveth the whole World, (that is, the Devil, the Spirit of Error, the Spirit of Idolatry and Debauchery in All Nations,) was cast into the Earth, (that is, was thrown down low, and destroyed,) and his Angels were cast out with him: Lastly, That Kingdom, which the Apostle St Paul tells us, is not in Word, but in Power; is not Meat and Drink, (Forms and Ceremonies,) but Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.

THIS, in the *New Testament*, is the frequent and usual acceptation of this Phrase, *The Kingdom of God*; It signifies the *State of the Gospel*, or the establishment of *true Religion* in the World. From which Use of the Phrase in Scripture, we may by the way observe, how greatly all such *Enthusiastick* persons err, who under the Notion of the *Kingdom of God*, represent to themselves either the *Saints* exercising *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*, or *God himself* influencing the Minds of Men by his *absolute and irresistible Power*. As to the former Notion, That of the *Saints* exercising *Temporal Authority and Dominion* in *This World*; in *This Sense*, our Saviour has expressly declared, that his Kingdom is *not of This World*; And the True Prosperity of the Church of God, 'tis plain, does not at all consist in the Increase of *Temporal Grandeur*, which tends always to corruption; but in the Increase of *True Holiness and Virtue* only, in the Hearts and Lives of Men. And as to the Other Notion, That of *God's* influencing the Minds of Men by his *absolute and irresistible Power*; This also is a very erroneous apprehension concerning the manner of *God's* ruling over *Moral Agents*: For the True Greatness and Glory of a Prince reigning in his Kingdom, is the *Willing Obedience* of his Subjects, not their *Weakness and Incapacity of resisting him*: And in all things relating

ating to Religion and Morality, 'tis not magnifying the Glory and Majesty of God, to suppose Him acting upon and over-ruling mens *Wills* by his *Power*, but to suppose *Them* (like *reasonable* creatures) *chusing* to obey his *Commands* by their *Wills*, and loving the Practice of *Virtue and Goodness*.

THIS therefore is the usual Meaning of the Kingdom of God in Scripture: It denotes the State of the Gospel, or the Prevalency of True Religion among Men.

NEVERTHELESS, since, at the Best, all that can here be done in this imperfect State towards establishing God's Kingdom of Virtue and Righteousness, and consequently of True Happiness among his Creatures: Since, I say, All that can be done towards these great Ends in this present frail and imperfect State, is only in order to a more complete and perfect State hereafter, when God shall have put down all Rule and all Authority and Power; and when All Enemies, Satan, and Sin, and Death, shall be entirely destroyed; and his Saints shall reign with him in Glory for ever: Therefore to That future and perfect State it is, that This phrase, *The Kingdom of God*, always has reference, even when 'tis applied to the state of the Gospel Here: And That Heavenly State it is, which ultimately and properly is stiled the Kingdom of God; Wherein the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father; Into which Kingdom, there shall in no case enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever loveth or maketh a Lye; but they who overcome, (that is, they who so resist the Temptations of Covetousness, Ambition, and Sensual Pleasure, as in midst of a degenerate and debauched World, to follow Truth, and Right, and Charity, fearing God, and keeping his Command-

Commandments;) *These shall receive the Kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the World*, and (according to the gracious Promise of their Father) shall inherit it for ever. This *Heavenly State*, I say, it is, to which That phrase, *The Kingdom of God*, always has reference, even when 'tis expressly applied to *the State of the Gospel here*. And 'tis with Great Propriety of expression, that *Both* these States are, as well *separately* as *jointly*, included under this *One Denomination*: They being indeed, not *Two distinct States*, but *One the continuation only* of the Other; differing from each other no otherwise, than as *Seed-time* from *Harvest*, or as *Childhood* from the perfection of *Man's estate*: *Virtue*, and *Goodness*, and the *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him at *present*, being the *Beginnings of Happiness here*; and the *Glories of Heaven* hereafter being nothing else but the same *Virtue*, and *Goodness*, and *Love of God*, and *Obedience* to him, completed and made perfect *There*, by an assurance of his uninterrupted Favour and Presence for ever. And This Notion, by the way, shows the extreme Folly and Absurdity of All Those, who (fundamentally erring from the Truth and Nature of Things,) found their *Religion here*, and their *expectations of Happiness hereafter*, in any thing else (whatsoever it be) *distinct* from *Virtue*, and *Righteousness*, and *Charity*, and *True Holiness*; which things are, not only the *Characters* and *Marks* of, but they are themselves necessarily and immutably the *Very Essence* of the *Kingdom of God*.

FROM what has been hitherto said in explication of this Phrase so very frequently met with in the *New Testament*, it appears therefore, that there are *Three Senses*, to which the full Notion of the *Kingdom of*

God extends. There is his *Kingdom of Nature*, by which he ruleth with irresistible Power, absolutely over *All*: There is his *Kingdom of Grace or Virtue*; by which he reigneth in the *Hearts of Moral Agents*, who obey him *willingly* or of *Free Choice*: And there is his *Kingdom of Glory*; wherein he shall finally be for ever adored by Those, who, through a Life of Virtue and True Holiness, shall be found meet to be *Partakers of That Inheritance of the Saints in Light*.

AND according to these *several* senses of the Phrase, must the Petition in the Text, *Thy Kingdom come*, be in like manner understood, to extend to different Significations.

1. IN the *first* place, as to the *Natural Kingdom of God*; *This* indeed we cannot with *Any Propriety* pray that it *may come*, because, by *Necessity of Nature*, it always is, and cannot but be, actually present. 'Tis necessarily, from *everlasting to everlasting*; a Kingdom of absolute and irresistible Power; without *Limits*, and without *Interruption*; In *all Places* alike, without distinction; and that cannot come at *one Time*, more than at *another*. Nevertheless, though the Kingdom of God, in *This* sense, is what we cannot pray *may come*; yet we may and ought to rejoice in the Thoughts of its being always Present: *Psf. xcvi. 1. The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice; let the multitude of the Isles be glad thereof*. 'Tis matter of great and just satisfaction to reasonable Minds, to consider that the Government and Sovereignty of the Universe, the Alone Truly absolute and uncontrolable Power, is in the hands of unerring Wisdom and of perfect Goodness; and that things are not under the uncomfortable Dominion of Blind Chance, or of inexorable and unrelenting Fate. But

2dly,

2dly, THAT therefore which our Saviour principally directs us to desire and pray for in This Petition, is the establishment of God's Kingdom of *Grace* or *Virtue*. That as his *Kingdom of Nature* ruleth *Always* absolutely over All things, so his *Kingdom of Grace* or *Virtue* may in due Time be universally established over its proper Subjects: As his natural Power is absolute and uncontrolable, so his spiritual Dominion over the Hearts and Wills of rational Creatures, may prevail finally against all the Opposition of Sin and Satan: As his *Glory* essentially is infinite and immutable; so relatively also, it may in due time be promoted and acknowledged by all reasonable Creatures. This is the principal sense of our praying for the *Kingdom of God* to come. 'Tis expressing our earnest Desire, that the Gospel of Christ, the true Religion of God, in its native and uncorrupted Simplicity, may spread and prevail over the whole Earth, as the *Waters cover the Sea*; and that all the Kingdoms of the World may become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: May become his Kingdoms, not by conquest of Temporal Power, but by Perswasion and Force of Truth, by the Power and Demonstration of the Spirit. And that all they who have embraced the Gospel in Profession, may let the Kingdom of God rule in their Hearts, by living as worthy Subjects of it. For 'tis in the willing Subjection of the Mind to Truth and Right, and in the regulating consequently all Actions, Passions, Appetites, and Affections, according to the Divine Laws; in This it is, that this Kingdom of God principally consists. By his Power, he can at all times subdue all things unto himself; and by This irresistible Dominion, the whole material unintelligent World is perpetually governed, and obeys it necessarily, without any possibility

bility of disobeying: But 'tis the *Will of God*, that *Intelligent and Rational Beings* should not obey *his Will*, but by *their own*; should not obey by *necessity of nature*, but by the *free Choice and unconstrained Compliance* of the *Will*. The *material Universe* therefore, the whole *Frame of Nature* is subject to the *Power of God*; but *reasonable Creatures only* are subject to his *Laws*. By This they become *accountable*, and *capable of being judged*: By This, they are rendered either *acceptable* to him, and *capable of Reward*; or *obnoxious*, and *liable to be punished*. This Trial, This Probation he puts upon them suitable to their rational Nature: And 'tis the *Perfection of their Nature*, and the *bighest Improvement of their Virtue*, to *chuse to obey him cheerfully and readily*. The more *excellent the Nature*, and the more *perfect the Virtue of any reasonable Creature* is, the more does it delight in obeying the most perfect *Will of God*, who is *Perfection and Goodness itself*. For this reason, the *Angels in Heaven* are stiled in Scripture, by way of eminence, *those Servants of His that do his Pleasure*. And our Saviour, as it were by way of *explication* of this Petition, *Thy Kingdom come*, directs us to proceed in the following words, *Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*: And elsewhere sets before us, to the same End, *his Own still more perfect Example*, *Job. iv. 34. My Meat is to do the Will of Him that sent me, and to finish his Work.* But

3dly and Lastly, THERE is still another sense of this Petition, which was very much insisted on in the Primitive Church: And That is, that God's *Kingdom of Glory* might *come speedily*; and that being *quickly delivered from the Miseries of this sinful and corrupt World*, they might *soon attain to That Blessed Hope of the Resurrection from the Dead*. It was an Opinion which

which prevailed generally in those early Ages, that at the Resurrection every man should arise in Order according to the degree of his Goodness; and that they who were raised and judged first, should themselves have a part in judging those which followed. Whether there was just ground for this opinion, or not, I shall not here take upon me to determine: But the Texts on which they built it were these which follow; 1 Cor. xv. 23. *Every man in his own order; Christ, the First-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at his coming: and Then cometh the end.* 1 Thes. iv. 16. *The dead in Christ shall rise first.* Rev. xx. 6. *Blessed and holy is He that has part in the first Resurrection.* 1 Pet. iv. 17. *Judgment must begin at the House of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 2. *Do ye not know that the Saints shall judge the World? — and that we shall judge Angels?* Jude 14. *The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints to execute Judgment.* Matt. xix. 28. *Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel: And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my Name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting Life: In St Luke it is, shall receive manifold more in This Present time, and, in the World to come, Life everlasting,* ch. xviii. 30. Lastly, Rev. xx. 4. *I saw Thrones, and they sat upon them, and Judgment was given unto them; and I saw the Souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and — they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* 'Tis remarkable, the Text does not say, that Christ came down

down and reigned upon *Earth* a thousand years ; as Many have imagined without *Any* ground : But only that the Martyrs *reigned with Christ* a thousand years ; *whatever* be the meaning of that Prophetical, and perhaps figurative, period of Time. These are the Texts upon which in the Primitive times was built That general Opinion, that at the Resurrection every man should arise in *Order* according to the *degree* of his Goodness ; and which made them therefore in their Prayers petition for an early Resurrection. Whether there was in the Texts sufficient foundation for the Opinion in *This particular* or no, (which 'tis not at all needful for *Me* here to determine,) yet in the general 'tis certain, that they who lived in such continual State of Persecution as the Primitive Christians did, and had such a lively sense as they always had upon their Minds of the Glory and Happiness of Heaven, had very good reason to pray earnestly and constantly, that the *Kingdom of God* (in this Last and most perfect Sense of the phrase) might speedily *come* ; that it would please God *shortly* to accomplish the Number of his *Elect*, and to *hasten* his *Kingdom* : According to that pathetick conclusion of the book of the *Revelation*, ch. xxii. 20. *He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly : Amen ; even so come, Lord Jesus.* And though (God be Thanked) *We* are not *Now* under such continual and such *severe* Persecution, as the *Primitive and Better* Christians were ; yet whosoever has a just sense of the *Vanity* and *Disorders* of this *present* World, and the *Glory* of the World to come ; whosoever observes what St Paul foretels, 2 Tim. iii. 12. *Yea, and All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution ;* and considers the Difficulties continually arising to *upright and sincere* men in *Every* Station of Life, from

the numerous Errors and Corruptions, evil Customs and debauched Practices, of an ignorant, superstitious, and tyrannical World; will see reason to think it *still* and *ever*, a most natural and proper part of the Prayer of every Good Christian, that the *Kingdom of God* may come; even That *New Heavens and New Earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

To which, that we may All at length arrive, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XVI.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

St. MATT. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

OUR Saviour in the 24th verse of this Chapter, warns his Disciples of the absolute Impossibility, of their being at the same time servants of God, and slaves to the pleasures of this present corrupt World. *No man, says he, can serve two Masters; No man can, at one and the same time, obey two Persons of a contrary disposition; The Judgment and Affections of his Heart and Soul, cannot at once be fixt and settled, upon things of a different and inconsistent nature: For either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.* He must of necessity, by obeying the one, disobey and neglect the other; and then, *his* Servant only he is, to whom he obeys. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon; ye cannot be truly religious and sincere servants of God, while your Hearts and Affections are too intently and inseparably fixt upon the vanities of the present sinful World; For in all probability there*

will sometime or other arise a competition between them ; and then he that cannot part with those enjoyments of the World, which are inconsistent with his Religion, *must* neglect his Duty towards God ; and he that will upon no Account neglect his Duty towards God, must be content to part with all the contrary Interests in the present World.

THIS therefore being the case, that we cannot attend wholly to two contrary things at once ; and that it cannot be imagined, but that one or the other of them must in many circumstances and upon many occasions be postponed ; our Saviour proceeds to advise us, ver. 25, *which* of the two opposite Interests 'tis of the greatest importance for us to secure. He admonishes us, that our main and principal Intentions ought always to be fixed upon our Chief, that is, our future Happiness ; without being unreasonably and anxiously solicitous, concerning the transitory enjoyments of this present life ; *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for the body, what ye shall put on.* With respect to the *Apostles*, to whom these words were more immediately directed, they are to be understood in the *strict* and *literal* Sense ; that being in a perpetual Progress from one place to another to preach the Gospel, they were not to make any provision at all for their own maintenance, but to rely entirely upon the Providence of God, by whose appointment they were employed in that spiritual work. But as the words express the duty of *Christians at all times and in all places*, they must be understood in a larger and less strict Sense ; to signify, that, after we have used a reasonable industry to attain the necessaries of this present life, we ought not to be any farther anxious and

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sollicitous about them ; but to rely on the Providence of God, for a continual supply of these things by his blessings upon our *just* Indeavours, and to be content with what proportion of them he is pleased to bestow upon us in the ways of Righteousness.

THE Reasons or Arguments, *why* we ought thus contentedly to rely upon the Providence of God, our Saviour adds in the 25th and following verses : *Is not the Life more than meat, and the Body than raiment ?* He that first gave you Life and Being, without your contributing any thing towards it yourselves ; will he not much more bestow upon you, in the ways of Virtue and Integrity, things necessary for the support and preservation of that Life ? *Behold the fowls of the Air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; they foresee not their own Wants, nor are able to make any provision against them ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them ; Are ye not much better than they ? And why take ye Thought for raiment ; Consider the Lillies of the Field how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet God gives them a continual increase, and clothes them with inimitable Beauty ; so that even Solomon himself in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these : Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the Field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith ?*

AFTER which Reasonings, he repeats again the admonition itself, ver. 31. *Therefore take no Thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink ? or wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (for after these things do the Gentiles seek ;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things ; (Which admonition, if it be applied, not to the then present*

circumstances of the Apostle's only, but to all Christians in general ; it must be understood with some limitations in the sense before explained ;) And then he adds, in the Words of the Text, *But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*

THE *Kingdom of God*, in Scripture-phrase, signifies, sometimes the Glory and Happiness of *Heaven* ; sometimes the state of the Gospel, the establishment of the Religion of Christ upon *Earth* ; and very frequently *Both* of them together ; they being in reality one and the same thing, differing only in time and in degree. For God carries on one uniform and regular design, of bringing all his Creatures to Righteousness and Happiness ; and these are inseparable the one from the other. Righteousness is the only possible foundation of true Happiness ; and Happiness is, both in the nature of things and by the appointment of God, the Fruit and the Effect of Righteousness. They differ only, as Seed-time and Harvest, as Childhood and the State of a Man ; *Grace or Virtue*, being the beginning, the ground and principle of *Happiness*, growing up and improving towards the Perfection of *Glory*. The *Kingdom of God* therefore, when it signifies *Both*, is not used in different Senses, but in its most proper and natural signification : On the contrary, when it seems restrained to *One* signification, it is *then* rather taken figuratively, and put only as a part for the Whole. In the Text, it is of little importance in *which* of the two Senses we understand it : For, if by the *Kingdom of God*, be meant the state of the Gospel or the Religion of Christ here ; yet without doubt 'tis principally with regard to its final issue and perfection in *Heaven* : And if thereby be meant the Glory and Happiness

pineness of Heaven, yet this always presupposes the foregoing establishment of true Righteousness and Holiness upon Earth. Or, they may seem *Both* to be expressed in these words of our Saviour, *The Kingdom of God and his Righteousness*; the *Glory of Heaven*, and the *Way* that leads to it; the *End* to be ultimately aimed at, and the necessary and indispensable *Means* of attaining it.

To *Seek* these things, is to value and esteem them; to fix our Thoughts and Meditations upon them; to propose them to ourselves as the most valuable End, towards which all our Actions ought to be directed; to be diligent in inquiring and studying the Means, by which they may best be attained; and to be as zealous and hearty, as sincere and steady in our endeavours after them, as the *Gentiles*, i. e. as worldly men, are, in seeking after the Pleasures and Profits, in pursuing the Interests and Injoyments of the present Life. This is to *seek* the *Kingdom of God*, and his *Righteousness*: Using our utmost endeavours, imploying all our Powers and Faculties, to promote the Interest of true Religion and the Practise of Virtue among Men, which is the beginning of the *Kingdom of God on Earth*; in order to secure to Ourselves and Others a portion in that eternal state of Happiness, which is the final establishment of his *Kingdom in Heaven*.

SEEK ye *first*; i. e. seek these things *before*, and in preference to all other things; seek them with greater diligence and more earnest labour, with steadier zeal and with a warmer affection, with greater care and deeper concern, with a more constant and unwearied application: Seek them as things of greater moment, even of infinite importance; so as in competition always to prefer them clearly before all other Interests
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and Designs whatsoever: Considering that there is no proportion between things finite and infinite, no comparison between things temporal and eternal: that it will be unspeakably a greater Happiness to be judged worthy of the meanest portion of that eternal inheritance, where *neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal*, than to be put in possession of all the short-lived empires of this World, and of all those transitory Riches, which of themselves moulder away in few years into that dust from whence they were originally taken: that 'tis *even here* infinitely a greater pleasure to *save a soul from Death by converting a Sinner from the Error of his Ways*, than Sensual and Voluptuous Persons ever find in the highest gratifications of Sense, or worldly minds in the possession and enjoyment of the largest Treasures.

SEEK ye *first* the Kingdom of God; *i. e.* not so as wholly to exclude the care of other things; For That is impossible in this present Life, and to pretend to it, is but Enthusiasm, and hinders the spreading of true Religion: But seek *this* chiefly and in the first place; Make *this* your principal and main care; Suffer nothing to interfere or come in competition with it: Do this *above* and *before* all other things, and yet other things need not to be left undone. The very Command itself of seeking this *first*, implies that other things also may be sought *afterwards*; that other things likewise may be taken care for, in their proper *place* and *subordinate* Rank; with a due and moderate degree of affection, such as may always be consistent with this ultimate and great design. And with *This Limitation*, if not to the *Apostles themselves*, yet at least so far as they can be a general precept to *all Christians at all times*,

times, must the Words (as I before hinted) of necessity be understood.

THE Words being thus explained, we may observe in them these three things:

I. A Precept, or the Duty commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.*

II. THE manner and degree of the Obligation, *Seek it first.*

III. THE Promises even of a temporal Reward annexed. *And all these things shall be added unto you.*

I. THERE is in the Words a Precept, or the Duty commanded, *Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* And here without doubt, there is no Man who with any the least degree of Sincerity calls himself by the Name of Christian, but professes and thinks that he seeks the Kingdom of God. The very title and profession of a Christian, implies as much as his being a Candidate for Heaven; And so long as he continues a member of the Church of Christ here, he is apt to believe that he retains his title, and is going forwards towards his inheritance in the glory that shall be revealed hereafter; especially if he be constant in his outward Profession; if he be zealous for Notions which perhaps he understands not, and which tend not much to influence practice; and if he be diligent in attending the external rites and services of Religion. But 'tis observable that our Saviour tells us, St. Luke xiii. 24. that there are many that seek to enter in, who shall not be able; And in the expression of the Text itself he plainly enough intimates, that Men may in vain seek the Kingdom of God, if they seek it not according to the righteousness thereof. Since therefore there is such a thing as Seeking without Effect; and to fall finally short of what we profess to Seek for, is

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at least an equal, perhaps a greater Misery, than never to have sought after it at all ; it cannot but be a Subject worthy our most serious Consideration, to inquire into the full meaning and extent of this precept of our Saviour ; which unquestionably is not obeyed in its true Sense, unless we *so Seek* as to be able to *Find*. St Paul, 1 Cor. ix. 24. compares the life of a Christian to a Race, wherein *they that run, run all, but one receiveth the prize* ; and thereupon he exhorts his Corinthians *so to run*, that they might *obtain*. In like manner our Saviour in the Text, when he commands us to seek the Kingdom of God, and directs us to seek it in the way of righteousness, and elsewhere warns us that many who seek it shall not be able to find it ; he cannot but be understood as exhorting us to seek it earnestly and effectually and in *such* a manner, as that we may not finally fail to attain it.

FOR our clearer direction therefore in obeying this precept, 'tis to be observed, that seeking any thing sincerely and effectually, implies in it the following particulars.

I. HAVING a just *value and true esteem*, for the thing we profess to seek after. For the desires and indeavours after any object, must of necessity always be proportionable, not to the real and intrinsic value of the thing itself, but to the degree of the *impression* it makes upon our mind, and of the affection it consequently excites in it. There are great numbers of those who call themselves Christians, who though they are afraid indeed of the punishment of Hell, and cannot bear the terror of eternal torments ; (which makes them therefore not dare to be openly profane ;) yet they have no real esteem for the state of Heaven, no earnest desire after that Happiness, which consists
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in the likeness of God and in the Perfection of Virtue. To prevent the ill Effects of which Remissness, the Scripture uses great variety of Arguments, to excite in us a just Regard and true Value, for the greatness of that Happiness, which God has vouchsafed to prepare for them that love and obey him ; representing it to us under the Notion of a *Pearl* of such great price, that that Person is spoken of as acting very wisely, who immediately sold all that he had to purchase it ; under the similitude of a *Crown* that never fades ; of a *Kingdom* that will continue for ever ; of a *Prize* which no Labour can be too much in contending for ; of a *Glory* shining forth as the Sun, as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever ; of a *Treasure* that can never waste, nor be diminished either by violence or fraud ; of *fulness of joy* without intermission, and *pleasures* that will last for evermore ; of *seeing the Face* of God, and being made like unto him, and being assured of his Love and Favour for ever. And yet all these are but figurative expressions, Comparisons, and very imperfect representations ; For, after all that is or can be said, yet *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath entered into the Heart of man to conceive, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him.* In which *One* elegant Image there is contained *much Variety* under a most beautiful Gradation. Great is the Diversity of glorious Objects which entertain the *Eye* in contemplating the beautiful Order and exquisite proportion of the Works of God ; and yet this is far exceeded by the hearing of the Ear, and by the larger compass of Other men's observations joined with our own. Many are the Glories which the *Ear* hath heard of, in the description of all parts of the World at present, and in the Histories of the Ages

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that have past before us; and yet these likewise are still far excelled, by what the Heart of man is able to conceive, and the Mind can represent to itself in the Imaginations of the Thoughts. Vastly great, and even unlimited are the Glories, which a vigorous and comprehensive *Imagination* can frame to itself as possible; and yet even these likewise (says the Apostle) are as far excelled by the glory that shall be revealed in the *Kingdom of God*, as the Seeing of the Eye is by the Hearing of the Ear, or the Hearing of the Ear by the Imagination of the Heart. But because these things after all are in their own nature *spiritual*, and can only be *spiritually discerned*; 'tis still a matter of considerable Difficulty, and requires frequent and serious Meditation, to possess our minds with a just value and due esteem of them; which is absolutely necessary, in order to our seeking them worthily, and with that earnestness and diligence they deserve. The Affections must be drawn off from vain Imaginations, and the Mind reconciled to the Love of Truth and Goodness: We must *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, as our Saviour expresses it; or, in the Psalmist's Phrase, *thirst after it*, even as the Hart pants after the Water-brooks. Otherwise, what wonder is it that men fall short of the Kingdom of God, both here and hereafter; that they attain not to its Righteousness here, and to the Glory of it hereafter; if their Desires after it be weak, their indeavours careless, and they seek it as if they sought it not?

2. SEEKING any thing heartily and effectually, implies that we *fix our Attention* continually, *i. e.* habitually upon it. 'Tis not sufficient that our judgment be convinced of the importance and necessity of Religion, unless our Passions and Affections likewise be
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in some measure interested. Nor is it enough that our Affections be moved once or seldom, but our zeal must be renewed by frequent meditation. *We must give earnest heed to the things which we have heard, least at any time we should let them slip,* Heb. ii. 1. For, as in matters of Sense, Objects at a distance appear small and imperfect; and nothing but reasoning and judgment, can correct the errors and deceptions of the Sight; so in matters of Religion and of spiritual concern, nothing but frequent consideration and earnest and serious meditation, can represent those things as present to us, so as to cause them to make vigorous and lasting impressions upon our Minds, which yet we all know cannot be very far distant from Us: For Death is not remote from the longest Liver in this transitory World; and That conveys us if not immediately, yet without any farther Change of our State, it conveys us unto Judgment. To prevent our Attention being diverted from these things, the Apostles are perpetually exhorting us, to raise our thoughts from the Vanities of this transitory and uncertain World, to the Glories of that Heavenly and eternal Kingdom which we profess to seek as our ultimate End: to *set our affections on things above, not in things on the Earth.* And our Saviour in his Parable of the Sower warns us, how the Word of the Kingdom, notwithstanding the unspeakable Weight and Importance of it, may yet very possibly make no more impression on the Minds of careless and inconsiderate Persons, than Seed cast upon the hard high-way can enter into the Earth and grow; or if the Word preached does make some impression at first, yet that it may easily be drowned by the Carts and Business and Pleasures of a corrupt World, as Corn is choked and over-run, by a multitude of Weeds.

And This without question is the true Reason, why in so great a number of Christians who seem in speculation to believe the great doctrines of Religion, and profess zealously to seek the Kingdom of God ; yet in reality these things have little more influence upon their Lives and Practice, than a Demonstration of any Truth laid aside and neglected after it has once been understood ; or than a passage of a History, forgotten after it has been once read ; than a Dream, when one awaketh ; or than a past Thought that is never recollected. This sort of Persons, are excellently described by *Ezekiel*, ch. xxxiii. 31. *They come unto thee, as my people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their Covetousness. And lo, thou art to them as a very lovely song, of one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument ; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.*

3. SEEKING any thing heartily and effectually, implies, that we be diligent and impartial in inquiring after the best and most certain means of attaining it. He that in earnest seeks the Kingdom of God, must not be bent upon choosing his own ways and doing his own pleasure, upon gratifying his own inclinations and indulging his own Passions ; but on the contrary must resolve to submit entirely to the Will of God, to embrace Truth where-ever he finds it, and to be always sincere in the Search after it. *Trust in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not to thine own Understanding*, Prov. iii. 5. Zeal without Knowledge, Heat in the Passions without Light in the Understanding, is like travelling in a wrong road ; which the faster a man goes, and the further he proceeds in it, the farther

ther he is from his journey's End, and with the greater difficulty will he return into the Way that truly leads to it. The first Disposition necessary in him that with Effect would *seek* the Kingdom of God, is, that with a Meek and Unprejudiced Mind he consider and study the *Means* by which God has directed him to obtain it, and with simplicity and purity of Intention receive the *ingrafted Word*, which is able to save his Soul: following the Example of Holy David, whose study all the day long was in the Law of God, and in the night-season also he meditated on the same. For Want of this desire of true instruction it is, that so many blind Superstitions, so many absurd unintelligible Doctrines, and so many unreasonable Practises, have in several Ages of the World crept in under pretense and in the room of Religion; making void the plainest Reason of Things and the most express Commandment of God, through the Corruptions and Disputes of Men; and fulfilling that Prophecy of our Saviour, that many should *seek to enter in*, (seeking in vain and wrong ways, in ways of their own inventing and agreeable to their own corrupt affections,) many should in this manner *seek to enter in, and should not be able*. The only safe, certain, and general direction, by which persons of all capacities may guide themselves in this matter, in the midst of a divided and contentious World, is to adhere stedfastly to the *two great Rules* which God has given us to walk by; *viz.* never allowing ourselves in any Action contrary to our Reason and Conscience, which (as the Wise man elegantly expresses it) is the *Candle of the Lord*; or contrary to *Scripture*, which is the brighter and clearer Light of Revelation. And herein we must first take care, not to fail in the *foundation*; in those plain and certain

things, wherein no man can innocently mistake, but *he that runs may read them*; in those great commandments, those weightier matters of the Law, the Love of God and of our Neighbour: and then we may with more safety proceed to consider the *Superstructure*, of doctrines *more* speculative and *less* certain, of rites *more* difficult and of *less* importance. But for any man who is profane and a blasphemer of the Name of God, who is unjust and unrighteous towards his Neighbour, or who lives in the Habitual Practise of Intemperance and Debauchery; for such an One to pretend to *seek* zealously the Kingdom of God, in matters of external form, or in contending for Laws and Doctrines of Men, is like labouring to set in order the garments upon a *dead* Body; or like watering a Plant, whose very roots are dead. 'Tis contending about the *Name* of Religion, where the *Thing* is not; and for the *Shadow*, where there is no *Substance*. And here comes in that great and never-failing Rule of our Saviour, *By their Fruits ye shall know them*. Whoever is more concerned for particular Forms and Ceremonies, for Doctrines of a Sect or Party, for Dominion over other men's Consciences, for any thing that depends on temporal Authority, than for the Discovery of Truth and the Practise of Virtue; very sure we may be, that That Man's religion is Vain.

Actly and lastly, SEEKING any thing heartily, sincerely, and effectually, implies, that we immediately *Practise and put in Execution*, what we are once satisfied is the true Means to obtain it. Resting in the speculative part of Religion, is as if a man should hope to arrive at his journey's end, merely by instructing himself in the knowledge of the Way. No: He that in earnest *seeks the Kingdom of God*, must not only
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know and understand, but must in the course of his Life put in *Practice* also the *Righteousness thereof*. Though I speak (saith St. Paul) with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal: and though I have the gift of Prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing. The Pharisees understood, the Scribes disputed well about the Law; and many at the day of judgment shall say, Lord, have we not taught in thy streets, and in thy name done many wonderful works; and yet he will say unto them, I know you not; depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity: For, not he that knows, but he only that does righteousness, is righteous. And this is evidently the Work, not of a few hours, but of a whole life: So that they who put off their Repentance to their Death-bed, far from seeking first, do plainly seek only in the last place the Kingdom of God and his righteousness: i. e. they are the greatest neglecters and despisers of it: And consequently they shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven; i. e. in Scripture-phraze, far shall they be from ever arriving there. Which brings me to the IIId thing I proposed to speak to, viz. the manner and degree of the Obligation; Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

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SERMON XVII.

Of the KINGDOM of GOD.

MATT. vi. 33.

But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

'TIS a very lively and affecting description of Providence, which our Saviour gives us in his excellent discourse to his Disciples in this chapter: That our *heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him*; and is at all times able and willing to supply us with what his infinite Wisdom knows to be needful and convenient for us; that not only *men* who are endued with reason and forecast, and have the advantage of their own labour and industry; but even the *Ravens and Fowls of the Air, which neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn*, have yet a plentiful provision made for them, and are continually fed by his bountiful Providence: Yet not a *Sparrow*, one of the meanest of Birds, *falls to the ground without him, i. e. without his direction or permission*; not one of them, as St Luke expresses it, *is forgotten before God*; That not only

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Creatures endued with Life and Sense, but still further, even the *Grass* and *Flowers* of the Field, which can contribute nothing towards their own support, nor are at all sensible of what is done for them, have yet in them more and greater marks of the inimitable workmanship of the great Creator of all things, than ever the Courts of the greatest Princes, even that of *Solomon* himself, had of humane artifice and earthly glory: Nay, further, that even things of a still lower degree than either Plants or Animals, those very things which of all others seem to us the least valuable and least to be regarded, even *these* are not beneath the care and inspection of Providence, but the very *hairs of our heads are all numbred* before God.

THE Use our Saviour makes of this lively Description of Providence, is to teach us to rely at all times upon the Care and Protection of God, without unreasonable anxiety, diffidence, and distrust. And indeed, were not the noble Subject carelessly and inconsiderately passed over in mens thoughts, without attention and serious meditation; or were there not secretly in the breasts of men, *an evil Heart of Unbelief*, it is not possible but this excellent Argument would generally produce in the Minds and Lives of men, its just and natural effect. Men who study and contemplate the *Phænomena* of *Nature*, which are the Works of God, the further they carry their inquiries, and the deeper discoveries they make, the More, and the more undeniable Evidences they perpetually find, that the Works of Nature are not the Blunders of Chance, or the blind Effect of Unintelligent Fate; but the continual Operations of God who governs all things, by the uninterrupted care and interposition of an All-wise Providence, which *neither slumbers nor sleeps*, and from
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whose direction nothing is exempted, at any time or in any place. Christians, who according to their Profession, believe the *Scriptures*, find our Saviour in the passages now recited, declaring fully and in few words this great Truth, confirming it by his Divine Authority, to those who have not capacities or opportunities of observing it in the nature of the things themselves; and making infinitely a better improvement of it, to cause us to put our Trust worthily in God who governs all things, than ever was made by any of the Philosophers in any Age of the World: *If God, saith he, so feeds the Birds of the Air, and clothes the Grass of the Field; how much more will he take care of you, O ye of little Faith?*

BUT our Saviour's Argument does not end here: The consideration of the Care of Providence over us, teaches us to trust in God for a supply of all things necessary *here*; and This our Trust in him for things necessary *here*, is in order to enable us with greater earnestness and less distraction of Thought, to attend upon the one thing necessary, the securing our portion in the eternal Happiness of the Kingdom of God *hereafter*: That our Hearts being weaned from an overfond Love and Affection for the transitory enjoyments of this present World, may be *there* more surely and steddily fixed, where is laid up our true and lasting treasure; even *that treasure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupteth. Take no thought therefore*, says our Lord; *i. e.* be not eager and solicitous, anxiously and unreasonably careful, for these things which the *Nations of the World seek after, even the Gentiles which know not God: But rather seek ye the Kingdom of God*; so it is expressed in *St Luke*; or in the words of the Text, *Seek ye first the Kingdom*

Kingdom of God and his Righteousness: You, saith he, who have the Happiness to know God, and to whom his Glory has been particularly revealed; you who are blessed with the knowledge of his true Religion, of the Purity and Excellency of his divine Laws, and the great and eternal Reward which will attend the Practice of them; Live ye suitably to so excellent a Belief, and answerably to so great a degree of Knowledge: Let your affections be raised above things earthly and temporal, to those which are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal; Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness; and all these things, these earthly and temporal blessings, so far as the Wisdom of God sees necessary for your present comfortable subsistence, shall be added unto you.

IN a foregoing Discourse upon these Words, I observed in them these three things:

I. A Precept or Duty commanded; *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.*

II. THE manner and degree of the Obligation; *Seek it first.*

III. THE Promise even of a temporal Reward annexed; *And all these things shall be added unto you.*

I. IN discoursing upon the Precept or Duty commanded; *Seek ye the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness;* I observed, that Seeking any thing heartily and effectually, implies these four things:

1st, THAT we have a just value and esteem for the thing we pretend to seek after.

2^{dly}, THAT we fix our Attention continually, i. e. habitually upon it.

3^{dly}, THAT we be diligent and impartial in inquiring after the best and certainest means of attaining it. And

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4thly, THAT we immediately *præfise* those Means, and heartily put them in Execution. And these I have already enlarged upon.

I proceed now in the II^d place, to consider the particular manner and degree of our Obligation to this Duty; contained in the *comparative* expression, Seek ye *first*, or (as 'tis expressed in St Luke,) Seek ye *rather* the Kingdom of God. And here (as I before took notice in the Explication of the Text,) it is reasonable to observe, that the Word *first* or *rather*; as in the *comparative* Sense it *heightens* the Obligation of the Duty, and signifies that we are bound to seek the Kingdom of God *more heartily, more earnestly, more zealously, with greater constancy, with greater diligence, with stronger and more intense affections*, than can reasonably be employed about any temporal concern; so, on the contrary, in the *absolute* Sense, 'tis a *relaxation* or *diminution* of the strictness and rigour of the Duty; signifying, that we are not obliged to seek the Kingdom of God *wholly* and *only*, in a *total* and *absolute* exclusion of all other desires, (as some melancholy well-disposed persons may be apt to imagine;) but only that we are to seek it *chiefly* and in the *first* place; as being infinitely of more value and of greater importance to us, and consequently infinitely worthier of our highest care and concern than any temporal and worldly affairs. But the very Word itself, Seek this *first*, implies in the proper notion of it, that *other* things also may be desired *afterward*, i. e. in their due place, and with a subordinate affection. The Words immediately foregoing, *Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or where-withal shall we be clothed*, seem indeed to be spoken absolutely and without restriction: And perhaps to the Apostles themselves, the

the immediate Hearers of this Discourse of our Lord, who were to have no settled habitation or abode, but were to preach the Gospel from one Nation and Kingdom to another; to *them* possibly this instruction was intended so to be understood, in the absolute and unrestrained Sense. But as the Circumstances of Christians in following times, necessarily made the strict and literal Sense of those words altogether impracticable; so the Words of the Text immediately following them, evidently give us room to interpret them in such a manner, as to be a prohibition *only* of *immoderate* and *excessive* Cares; of *such* Cares and Sollicitude for the things of the World, as is unworthy of the Character, and inconsistent with the Zeal and Diligence of those whose Heart and whose Treasure is in Heaven. 'Tis not forbidden us to desire and to use moderately the things of the World; but we must with our *first* and *greatest* care, seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness.

THE *Limitations* therefore of this Duty, or the particular *Degree and Manner* of the Obligation expressed in the Text, may be set forth in the following particulars.

1st, SEEKING in the *first* place the Kingdom of God, signifies, in the least and lowest sense, that we must *not delay and put off to the future* our designs and intentions of living religiously. The Apostles were obliged, when they were first called by our Saviour, to leave all that they had and follow him; and we find that some who desired only to take leave of their Friends, or to have time but for the burial of a nearest Relation, were not allowed the indulgence even of so short a delay. The Person who when he was commanded by our Saviour to *follow him*, answered readily,

Lord,

Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them
farewell which are at home at my house, St Luk. ix. 61,
was told, that no man having put his hand to the plough,
and looking back, is meet for the Kingdom of God: The
expression 'tis plain is *figurative*; but the Sense is,
He who, when he is convinced of the Truth of Reli-
gion, is not willing *immediately* to comply with the
Obligations thereof, but desires still a longer and a little
longer delay, is not worthy to be admitted to enjoy the
benefit of it at all. And this refusal to allow of any
delay, was at a time when our Lord himself had not
where to lay his Head; and when the Circumstances
of things were such, that no man could become a
Disciple of Christ, but he must necessarily part with
not only the *sinful*, but even all the *innocent* also and
most allowable enjoyments and comforts of Life; at a
Time when a man that had kept all the commandments
from his Youth, according to the usual extent and in-
terpretation of the Law, was dismissed by our Saviour
with a very severe intimation of the danger even of
not-ill-gotten possessions; because he was not willing
to *sell all that he had, and give to the poor*: In a word,
when no man could embrace the Christian Religion, but
he must at the same time resolve to lose all that he had,
and very probably even his life itself also for the sake of
the Gospel. How much more *Now*, when God is
pleased to require of us a much easier Obedience;
when we are required, not to part with *all* that we
have, but only to retrench our vain and sinful expences;
not to sell *all* and give to the Poor, but to be charitable
out of the Superfluities of our plenty and abundance;
not to lay down our *lives*, or leave even the *comfortable*
Enjoyments of life, but only to forsake the unreasonable
and unfruitful Pleasures of Sin, the Madness and Follies

of Profuseness, the unprofitable Gains of Unrighteousness, the hurtful and mischievous extravagancies of Intemperance, the malicious and unmanly pleasures of Pride and Arbitrariness, of Oppression, Uncharitableness, and Revenge: *How much more*, I say, *in these days*, when God is pleased to exact of us only so easy an Obedience; *how much more* unreasonable is it, that men should *delay* complying with so good, so gentle, so necessary an Obligation? *How much more* unreasonable is it that men should *first* desire to satisfy themselves with the enjoyments of Sin, and then hope to mock God by *at last* desiring to enter into his Kingdom? And how unworthy must they needs be *at the End of their lives* to be admitted into his Kingdom, who would not be persuaded to employ the *beginning and best* of their days in seeking the Righteousness thereof? 'Tis no advantage to God if we are righteous and obedient to him, nor is there any accession made to *his* Self-sufficient Happiness, by *our* becoming Subjects of his Kingdom: 'Tis for our *own* benefit only, that he commands us to do Righteousness; and therefore, if we slight and neglect and carelessly let slip the opportunities of preparing and qualifying ourselves to be members of his Kingdom, 'tis very just in *him* to exclude us therefrom. Not that any man, when he first comes to a true sense of Religion, how late soever it be, hath reason absolutely to despair; but that those who are better instructed in their early days, should have no encouragement to defer their Obedience.

2dly, SEEKING *first* the Kingdom of God, signifies, that though our *actual* intention may often lawfully be employed upon the things of the World, yet our *habitual, principal, and greatest* regard must always be *set* upon the Life that is to come. I have *before* shown, that

that *seeking any thing heartily and effectually*, necessarily implies, among other things, that we *fix our attention continually*, i. e. *frequently and habitually upon it*. And now to apply this, in the *comparative* Sense, to the Precept in the Text; 'Tis manifest, that *seeking the Kingdom of God first*, or *before the things of the World*, necessarily implies, that even *while* we are employed in worldly affairs, in providing for the present necessities of life; yet our principal and main Intention must always habitually be directed towards our Ultimate and Great End. *Whatsoever thou takest in hand*, (as the wise Son of Sirach excellently expresses it,) *remember the End, and thou shalt never do amiss*, Ecclus. vii. 36. Thus a Traveller may employ his *immediate and present* Thoughts upon the conveniencies of his journey and the accommodations at his Inn; but yet at the same time, his *principal and chief* View will continually be upon the End of his Journey, and his safe arrival at home; and all other things will in course be directed with a subordination to That chief Design. And in *this* Sense, a man may be *at all times* seeking the Kingdom of God; without any way neglecting, or at all withdrawing himself from secular Business: Which was the original Error of those who first ran into the Superstition of a Monkish retirement; and, in order (as they weakly thought) to become more religious towards *God*, put themselves out of all capacity of doing any good amongst *Men*. There is no employment wherein a man may not perpetually be doing something for the Honour of God, for the Good of Men, or for the Improvement of the Virtues of his own Mind: There is no Business, nay, there is no innocent Diversion, wherein he may not make it his chief and constant care to act always like a reasonable

man and a good Christian. There is no state of life wherein he may not keep a constant Eye upon a future state, and so use the things of the present World, as that the great and ultimate scope of all his Actions may always respect that which is to come: He may stedfastly propose to himself one great design of his life, and endeavour to act always regularly upon that Design: He may constantly fix his main Intention upon his chief and ultimate End; and in every thing he does, be careful always to maintain a just regard to That. Every thing he undertakes may be either directly conducive to that End, or at least *not contrary to and inconsistent* with it. Which Method of acting, *sanctifies* all the *Business*, nay, even all the *Pleasures* and *Diversions* of life. And this is the

3^d THING, which the Phrase, (Seeking *first* the Kingdom of God,) necessarily implies, namely, that whenever there arises a *competition* between the Interest of Religion and that of the World, we always *prefer* the more important spiritual and eternal Interest, before any temporal and worldly concern. *If any man come to Me*, saith our Saviour, *Luke xiv. 26. and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and his own Life also, he cannot be my Disciple*; If he *hate* not Father and Mother, is, in modern language, a very harsh expression: But the meaning is, (according to the well-known Use of such ways of speaking among the Jews,) if he be not willing to part with *them*, when there is a Necessity so to do, rather than with his Religion. So our Saviour himself explains it, *St. Matt. x. 37. He that loveth Father or Mother more than Me, is not worthy of me*; —and *he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me*. We have reason

son to bless God we are not *now* called to so severe a trial ; neither are we required to part with *all things* for his sake, as the Disciples in the primitive times were obliged to do : But we are *at all times* under the same Obligation to be in *Readiness* to lose all, to have an *indifferency* for the things of the World *comparatively* to our Religion ; and to be habitually in such a Disposition of Mind, as to be *always willing* to part with whatsoever shall at any time come in competition with our Duty. And of this there *are* Trials, even in our present circumstances, by which Men *may* judge, in great measure, of their own Sincerity or Insincerity in this particular. For instance ; If a man, rather than deny himself the unlawful and unreasonable pleasure of a Debauch ; if, rather than part with the unjust gains of Fraud and Deceit, of Oppression and unrighteous Judgment ; if, rather than restrain the foolish and unfruitful Vanity of a profane Jest, of mockery and scoffing at Religion ; he is willing *Now* to lay aside all his hopes of Heaven ; (as every vicious man plainly does, notwithstanding his profession of Christianity ;) such a person *may* very easily judge, *how* ready he would be to leave *all*, even the *innocent* enjoyments of life, and even *life itself*, for the sake of that Religion which he *now* so slightly and upon every trivial an occasion openly dishonours. He indeed who *now* plucks out a *right eye*, or cuts off a *right hand*, who resists great temptations of unrighteousness, and, by the spirit of Religion, mortifies violent Passions and strong corrupt inclinations ; such a one may reasonably pretend, and has good evidence, has just ground of hope within himself, that if it should please God to call him to so severe a trial, he *should* be able to lay down even his life for his Religion. But if a man be
not

not faithful in that which is *least*, if he cannot prevail with himself to go through the *smallest* difficulty, what ground has he to pretend, that he would be faithful in that which is *much*, and undergo the *severest* and *most difficult* trial?

IN these particulars seem to be contained the full meaning and intention of the Precept, Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

IT remains that I proceed briefly in the

III^d and last place; To consider the Promise annexed even of a temporal reward; *and all these things shall be added unto you.* Now

FROM this Promise we may seem reasonably to infer these three things.

I. THAT, *generally* speaking, God blesses the endeavours of the righteous, and of those who trust in him; at least so far, as to supply them with the necessary supports and conveniencies of Life. (1 Kings iii. 13.) *I have been young, and now am old, saith the Psalmist, and yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.* Which Observation, though it was indeed more universally true under the *Jewish* dispensation, than in the Gospel-state; yet even *still* for the more part, *Godliness*, as St. Paul declares; *has the promise even of the Life that now is:* And our Saviour, through his whole Argument in the Context, seems to suppose, that Providence, which secretly directs and over-rules all Events, is particularly concerned to make provision for those, who in the faithful discharge of their duty rely upon him.

2. WHEN this happens *otherwise*, (as in the case of *Persecution* it necessarily must ;) then from the Promise here annexed we may reasonably conclude, that, what a righteous man loses upon account of his Religion, shall by the Care of Providence be, Some other way, made good to him. *There is no man*, saith our Saviour, *that has left house, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel ; but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time—with Persecutions ;* i. e. he shall either in the course of Providence be restored, to more than he has lost ; or he shall receive more than an equivalent in that peace and comfort and satisfaction of mind, that joy in the Holy *Ghost, which arises from a Sense of a good Conscience and of the Favour of God.

* 3. WHEN *neither* of these are secured to a man, (as they can only be affirmed for the *most* part ;) then it may certainly be depended upon, that his reward *hereafter*, shall be so much the greater. *Usually* he shall in the *present time* receive an hundred fold, *together with Persecutions ;* but in the End *infallibly* eternal life. It was a noble Answer to this purpose, (where with I shall conclude,) which the three children of the *Jews* gave to *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*, when they were commanded to fall down and worship the graven Image which he had set up, under pain of being cast alive into a burning fiery furnace; *Dan. iii. 17.* It was proposed to them to forsake the religion of their God for the Law of the King and the Religion of the country ; and their Answer was ; *If it be so ; our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace ; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O King : But if not ;* (if he does not think fit

fit to deliver us ; yet) *be it known unto thee, O King,*
that we will not serve thy Gods, nor worship the graven
Image which thou hast set up. They depended upon
God, if he did not think fit to deliver them from tem-
poral Death, that he would recompence it to them
with Life and Happiness eternal.

The End of the SECOND VOLUME.



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